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THE FOUNDATIONS.

THE FOUNDATIONS:

A SERIES OF LECTURES

ON

THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY

JOHN MONRO GIBSON, D.D.,

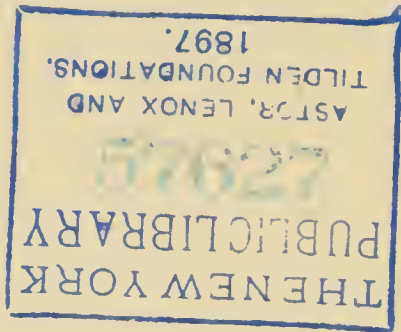
AUTHOR OF "THE AGES BEFORE MOSES."

CHICAGO:

JANSEN, McCLURG & COMPANY.

1880.

716 S. R.



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A. D. 1880.

STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED
BY
THE CHICAGO LEGAL NEWS COMPANY.

PREFACE.

The author of these Lectures is well aware that "of making many books" on the Evidences of Christianity "there is no end;" but, neither does he see why there should be, until there is an end of infidelity. The present brief series makes no pretensions to fulness of treatment, but it is hoped that its general method and plan, which are believed to be new; its attempt to deal with phases of unbelief which are specially prominent at the present time; and, above all, its brevity, may secure it a field of usefulness, and realize, in some measure, the expectations of those who have urged its publication.

CHICAGO, February, 1880.

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE FOUNDATIONS.

LECTURE I.

CLEARING THE GROUND.

CHRISTIANITY is its own best evidence. Give us more and more of real Christianity, and we shall need less and less of its evidences. "Ye are my witnesses," says Christ to His disciples. One truly Christian life will do more to prove the divine origin of Christianity than many lectures. Hence, it is of much greater importance to develop Christian character than to exhibit Christian evidences.

But it is not right to neglect the other altogether. Christianity is not merely a life, the beauty and goodness of which ought to be made apparent by living specimens. It is a history and a doctrine, the truth of which ought to be made apparent, as in the case of any history or any doctrine. It carries with it a claim on the allegiance of all mankind,

which claim ought by all means to be amply justified. Hence the importance of what are called the evidences of Christianity.

The faith which the Bible claims is not blind faith, but intelligent faith. We are called upon to prove all things, and to be ready always to give to every man that asketh us a "reason of the hope that is in us," and we cannot do this—the first not at all, the other not thoroughly—without at least a general knowledge of the foundations of our faith.

In these times especially, it is important that this subject should be widely known. In former times infidelity for the most part took the shape of simple indifference and cold neglect. Now it takes the position of open hostility, and we ought to be ready to meet it. Questions concerning the fundamentals of religion are no longer confined to a few infidel writers on the one side and a corresponding number of theologians on the other. They are discussed throughout the whole compass of our literature. We find such discussions in every issue of all the first-class reviews, and in almost every issue of the first-class newspapers.

If this be so, why add to the Babel of words? Is not the subject quite enough discussed already? But here is the difficulty. Infidel writers have the very easy task of presenting objections. Easy for

two reasons. First, an objection may be presented in a sentence or two; the answer to it may require a column or a page. It will be at once seen what enormous advantage this gives in a newspaper controversy to the anti-Christian side. But besides this, an objection appeals to ignorance; the answer to it must be founded on knowledge. How much knowledge does it require to see the point of such objections as those which Colonel Ingersoll brings against religious truth? Are not the most ignorant people the most apt to accept his travesties as genuine arguments? On the other hand, it requires some familiarity with linguistic and literary and historical, and even with theological studies, to be able fairly to appreciate the answers to such objections even as these.

The evidences of Christianity are cumulative. They consist of a vast mass, all converging to one point, viz., the divine origin of Christianity. It is obvious then that it requires a quite extensive knowledge to be able to appreciate the evidence in its fulness and completeness. And it requires a proportionate knowledge to be able to appreciate a proportionate amount. You can easily see, then, what an easy task an objector has with one who is almost ignorant of the subject in its entirety. You are standing by the side of a great river. A dark mist

is hanging over it, so that you cannot see the direction in which it is flowing. Close beside you, near enough to see by peering down into it, your attention is called to a little stream flowing north. So "the river flows north," you are told. "Yes, I see it does." Yet all the while the majestic river is flowing south, and that is only a little eddy. But before you can be convinced that its course is really southward, it will be necessary that the mist be raised from a large part of the stream. If the mist had not been there, if the broad expanse of the stream had been full in your view, it would have been impossible to lead you astray by pointing to the little eddy. And so it is with many to whose minds the little eddies of apparent contradiction are so easily presented. If they only saw the vast stream of truth flowing majestically and mightily on, they would not be disturbed by these little counter-currents. But they do not; and the reason why they do not is simply because they have never made themselves acquainted with the evidences. The subject is too large ever to be presented at all comprehensively even in the reviews, far less in the newspapers; and as for books on the subject, few have the time, even if they had the inclination, to read them.

The object of this course of lectures is to present, in as brief and comprehensive a form as possible, a

general view of this extensive subject, so as to supply for those who may need it, at least a framework on which knowledge derived from subsequent reading and reflection may be worked in; and so as to show that, though there are many questions about Christianity which it is hard, and some of which it may be impossible, to answer, there are so many, many things to be said in its favor that any reasonable man who has them in view may "know the certainty" "of those things which are most surely believed among us."

All that I propose to do at present is to clear the ground for the foundations, by offering some preliminary considerations. Some of these have been slightly referred to in what has already been said; but they are of sufficient importance to justify an articulate and distinct statement.

1. The subject does not admit of mathematical demonstration. Is this an acknowledgment of weakness, to begin with? By no means. Mathematical demonstration is out of the question in all departments of *real* knowledge, *i. e.*, our knowledge of persons and things. Its form is this: "Supposing this to be so and so, then that will necessarily follow." But it never can say: "This or that is so and so." Every student of mathematics knows that it is of no great consequence whether he draw his

figure well or ill. His right-angled triangle may be any number of degrees off the square, and his straight lines may be very shaky and crooked. No matter, the demonstration comes out all the same. Why? Because he is not demonstrating anything about the figure actually before him, or any figure that he knows to exist, but about a figure in his mind constructed from a definition that has been laid down in the beginning. All that he proves is: "Suppose the figure to be so and so, then so and so will follow." When we have the liberty to make our own premises, then of course we may draw our conclusions with mathematical certainty; but in dealing with realities we cannot make our own premises; we must accept the facts as we find them, and when we reach certainty it cannot be mathematical, but what is called moral certainty. Now the distinction between mathematical and moral certainty lies here: mathematical certainty is the result of a single line of evidence, of such a nature as to be irresistible to any mind capable of following it. Moral certainty is the result of a number of converging lines of evidence, none of which may be absolutely convincing in itself, but which taken together claim the belief of reasonable men, and form a sufficient basis for duty. Now, it is of great importance to remember that it

is on moral and not on mathematical certainty that all our substantial beliefs are founded. It is not possible to demonstrate gravitation, yet we surely believe it. It is not possible to demonstrate that the sun will rise to-morrow, yet we surely expect it. It is not possible to demonstrate that it is wrong to steal, yet we do not scruple to punish the man that does it. All that we ask in other departments of thought and action is reasonable grounds for our faith; and why should we ask more in religion? Let us then, by all means, look for the converging lines of moral demonstration, and not for any single line of mathematical demonstration.

2. Our second consideration is the consequence of the first. It is this: That we are by no means bound to answer all the difficulties that may be presented as we travel along the different lines of proof. In a mathematical demonstration there are no difficulties and no room for objections. Why? Because the whole question lies within such easy compass. Dealing, as the demonstration does, not with real things, but only with certain supposed cases originating in the mind itself, we are easily masters of the whole field. We have the beginning, middle and end of it within the compass of our own minds. But as soon as we pass out of our own minds and deal with real things, as in science, the case is en-

tirely altered, as is apparent from the fact that, while all good mathematicians agree, the best of doctors may differ ; and what is true of the doctors is true of all scientific men, as well as theologians. Now, the field which is covered by the Christian religion is as broad as the universe and as long as eternity, for God, whom it reveals, is the Creator of all worlds, and His purposes, which it professes in part to unfold, stretch far beyond the limits of passing time. Rather a wide scope for objections, you see. And it would be passing strange if even a feeble mind could not gather a sufficiently formidable array. To answer all possible objections would require omniscience. Let us never, therefore be so foolish as to undertake to solve all difficulties. Never let what you do not know disturb what you do know. Enough to have sufficient positive evidence for believing what we do believe, without our troubling ourselves about answering all the difficulties which lie along the line of our belief. It must surely be a great mistake to allow an appeal to our ignorance to have greater weight than an appeal to our intelligence. Let us, then, not be disturbed by difficulties, so long as our positive proof is sufficiently strong.

3. Be careful to distinguish between *links* and *strands* of evidence, and do not allow our strands

to be treated as if they were mere links. The strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link. But the strength of a rope is not the strength of its weakest strand. It is the united strength of all of them. Here is a chain-cable warranted to hold an ocean steamship. Will it hold? Right in the middle of it is a weak link that would not bear the strain of a single ton. No matter how strong the other links may be, it is plain that that cable will not hold. Here again is a huge rope. Will it hold? Suppose you take one of the many fibres of which it is wrought and show it will not bear the strain of one pound weight. Does that prove the rope will not hold? By no means. It depends on how many such fibres are wrought together to make the one rope. Now, if you consider for a moment, you will see how unfair it would be, in order to show that the rope would not hold, to take each of its pieces separately, and say: There is something in this strand, but not sufficient to bear the strain, so it must be set aside: and so to go on from strand to strand until the entire rope was condemned. But that is just the way that most infidel writers deal with the evidences of Christianity. There are very many lines of proof. They take up each line by itself, and while they cannot but admit that there is some force in it, they say (and pos-

sibly they may be right in saying it sometimes) that there is not force enough to bear the strain of the mighty claim that Christianity makes on our faith and allegiance. And what then? Why, they set it aside altogether, and, in dealing afterwards with the other lines of evidence, they allow it no force at all. Is not that glaringly unjust? Remember I make no charge here, or anywhere else throughout these lectures, of intentional dishonesty. There are many who deal unfairly in their arguments who are perfectly honest in their intent. But the unfairness is none the less real on that account.

The illustration of the rope is good enough so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough, as a moment's thought will show. A rope of say three equal strands has three times the strength of each of them. But has a three-fold line of evidence just three times the strength of each line? No; it has immeasurably more. Take the simple case of independent witnesses. The testimony of one man gives a certain degree of probability. Does the testimony of a second quite independent witness only double the probability? No; it indefinitely increases it. And if a third independent witness should testify to the same fact, we should in all ordinary cases accept it as conclusive. Now consider whether it would be fair to say, "The first man may be mis-

taken, or may be untruthful, so you cannot accept his statement as settling the matter, and accordingly he must be set aside;" and then, having disposed of the second and third in precisely the same way, to sum up by saying: "I have proved that not one of all the three witnesses is conclusive, so your case is dismissed." Is there a lawyer in all the land that would justify such treatment of evidence? Yet it is done all the time in dealing with the many independent lines of Christian evidence; and we must not allow it.

4. Where the links in the evidence are successive, be sure to take them in the right order. A pyramid is the most stable of all structures; but even a pyramid will not stand upon its apex. The most skilful builder cannot build a house by beginning at the second story. Now, it is true that those who wait upon the Lord may "mount up with wings as eagles," and so there are multitudes of Christians who have attained to the very heights of Christian experience without climbing up the stairway of the Christian evidences. But when we wish to exhibit the solidity of the Christian temple, we must begin at the foundation and go up by plain and strong steps. You will find persons that are foolish enough to stake the entire system of Christianity on the interpretation of some partic-

ular text of Scripture. When some old idea that has long been attached to it has been exploded, they begin to tremble as if the very foundations were giving way. The foundation of their faith was the verbal inspiration of the entire Bible, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, so that a doubt attaching to a sentence or even a single word is sufficient to fill them with alarm. Now it is quite evident that this is not a desirable position for any one to hold. I here pronounce no opinion on the question of the nature or degree of inspiration. I only object to this or any theory of inspiration being made the foundation on which the whole structure of Christianity is supposed to rest, the ultimate fact beyond which we cannot go.

There are three main stages in the inquiry before us. There is, first, the being of God; second, the revelation of God in Christ; and last, the record of that revelation by the Holy Spirit in the sacred Scriptures. Now, it is true that, in a certain sense, the last is first and the first last. We open the Scriptures to learn of Christ, and we study Christ to know God. The Holy Spirit is the way to the Son, and the Son is the way to the Father. "Through Him we all have access by one Spirit to the Father." But in building the foundations, it will not do to invert the order. The existence of

God must be a settled matter before you raise the question whether He revealed Himself in Christ. And so, too, we must find some evidence that Christ was what He claimed to be, before we can be assured of the certain truth of what He said about the Holy Spirit and the sacred Scriptures.

The true order then is God, Christ, the Bible. And that is the order we propose to follow in these lectures. It will be understood from what we have said concerning the vast range of the subject, that we have no idea of being able to present it in its completeness. All we can do is to give an indication of the kind of argument by which the truth of Christianity is made apparent to those who honestly and earnestly inquire into it. We shall first show some of the reasons for believing that God exists. At this stage of the inquiry the Bible will not be used as evidence at all. We shall next show some of the reasons for believing that God has revealed Himself in His Son Christ Jesus. At this stage of the inquiry, the books, which when bound together are called the Bible, will be used, but simply as books by human authors, and dealt with according to the laws of evidence. We shall not beg the question of their inspiration. We shall then show some of the reasons for believing that we have a record of this revelation and of all that it is nec-

essary for us to know in regard to the preparations for it and results of it, a record which is not only generally correct, but on which we can rely because the men to whom we are indebted for it spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. After honestly and candidly pursuing such a line of inquiry as this, we believe a candid mind should have no difficulty in reaching an intelligent conviction that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are really "given by inspiration of God and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" and when we reach this point, the evidences of Christianity have fully served their end. The foundations firmly laid, we are ready to enter the temple and worship.

Remember, however, in conclusion, that while it is very desirable to be acquainted with the evidences of Christianity, both in order to prove all things for ourselves that we may "hold fast that which is good," and also that we may be able to "give to every man a reason for the hope that is in us," it is not necessary to know them in order to know Christ and be assured of His salvation. There is the sure and easy path of personal experience, which is open to all. It may take a learned man to set forth the reasons why bread is good, but a hungry man need not wait till the lecture is done before

he tries it. "O taste and see that God is good."

And yet there is one thing more, the unspeakable importance of the spirit in which you approach this subject, whether by way of the evidences or by the way of personal trial. You must come in the spirit of "meekness and fear." First, meekness. If you are vain in your own conceit, all will be vain. The gate of the kingdom is humility. And then, fear. It must be in no light and trifling spirit that you come. It is for your life. Come, then, in meekness and fear. Seek humbly and earnestly, and you will not seek in vain.

FIRST PART.

THE BED ROCK,
God Is.

LECTURE II.

THE WITNESS WITHIN.

THE Being of God is the underlying foundation of all religion. We propose, accordingly, to begin by giving some of the many reasons for believing that God is. This is, at present, the thick of the fight between the believer and the unbeliever. In former times, among English-speaking people, the alternative was Deism or Christianity. Infidelity meant the rejection of Christ, while the belief in God was supposed still to remain, and to be all-sufficient for religious purposes. But the deistic position is now practically abandoned. It is abandoned entirely by the leaders, and, though a good many of the rank and file of infidelity hold the old position still, they hold it in a very vague kind of way, and make no attempt worth speaking of to defend it. The great question is not now as between God in Christ and God out of Christ, God in the world and God out of the world, but between God and no God; or to put it more accurately, be-

tween those who say that the heavens and the earth, and all that are in them declare the glory of God, and those who leave it an entirely open question whether there be a God or not. Hence the special importance, in these times, of this part of the argument.

Remember at the outset that the claim to know God does not mean to comprehend Him. We do not even comprehend one another. We know one another, and even ourselves, only in part. But, though I may know you only very partially, that is no reason for doubting that I know your existence, and *something* about you besides. You see how careful the Apostle is in this regard. He says, "That which may be known of God, is manifest," implying that there is very much we may not know; but that casts no discredit whatever on the little we do know.

But, though our means of knowing God are necessarily limited, yet the subject is so extensive that it would be presumptuous to attempt, after any fashion, anything like a complete presentation of it. All we can hope to do is to indicate the main lines of evidence, and give some idea of the manner in which each of them contributes to the conclusion, which all of them taken together render abundantly certain.

The knowledge of God is borne in upon us on every side of our many-sided nature. We are bound to the great Author of our being by a manifold cord which, if carefully analyzed, would be found to consist of very many strands. But as our limits forbid any attempt at minute analysis, we propose to consider the cable as consisting of four great strands. Whether or not there be any suggestiveness in the four-fold distribution of the powers with which we are called upon to worship God, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," we shall not, I think, go far astray, if we say that in man's complex nature we can distinguish intellect, conscience, heart, and soul (the meaning of the dubious word "soul" to be afterward explained). Each one of these has its own witness to the being of God.

Now, before we examine the witnesses, let us see if we know anything as to their truthfulness. If the testimony be clear, can we accept it as true? It seems to me that the only possible answer is, that we must. If our very nature is a lie, it is of no use to inquire after truth on any subject whatever. We must then accept as trustworthy the faculties with which we find ourselves endowed, and which are the only means we have of ascertaining truth. And

be it remembered this applies to them all alike. It is evidently irrational to suppose that we may discredit one part of our nature and be quite sure of another. Of course every part of our nature is liable to error. But this error to which we are liable cannot be supposed to come from our original constitution, else it would be impossible ever to recognize it as error, and equally impossible to correct it. We may err through ignorance, or through carelessness, or through weakness; but we cannot suppose that the source of the error can lie in the faculty itself, for to suppose this would be to render knowledge on any subject utterly uncertain. This is generally admitted so far as the intellect is concerned. Notwithstanding the many errors of thinking into which all men are apt to fall, hardly any ever suppose that the laws of thinking are a delusion and a snare. We must accept as true, that which the intellect decides to be true, inasmuch as there are no other possible means of deciding it. But the very same principle applies to the decisions of the conscience and of the heart. There are many of those who have absolute confidence in the human intellect, who have little faith in the conscience, and none in the heart. But is it not as plain as day, that if we are so constituted that our conscience will lie to us, it is just as likely that our intellect will

do the same? If the love which we find in our hearts be a delusion and a snare, why may not the laws of logic, which we find in our mental constitution, be equally a delusion and a snare? The man who will meditate a lie will look a lie; and if he can look a lie he may also act a lie; and if he can act a lie you cannot trust him not to tell a lie. If a man is a liar at all, you cannot trust him in anything. And so is it with our faculties. We must trust them all, or we cannot put confidence in any of them.

We shall begin with the witness of the heart. Here we find deep-rooted in our nature a sense of dependence on a Superior Being, and certain affectional longings and aspirations reaching out toward Him. Augustine but expressed the sentiment of humanity, except in so far as it has been overlaid by sin or starved by neglect, when he said: "Thou hast made the heart for Thyself, and it is ever restless until it finds its rest in Thee." As a rule, our infidel friends are not disposed to contradict us here. They say: "All right; that is just where religion belongs; it is a matter of sentiment, of emotion." And by saying this they think they have cast some doubt upon its reality. Now, it is true that our passing sentiments and emotions can never be a standard of reality; but to say that a

deep-seated abiding sentiment of the human heart is a falsehood, is to impeach our entire nature, and make it impossible to trust any part of it. What if this deep-rooted sense of relation to a Superior Being be, as it is sometimes called, a mere instinct; is that any reason why we are to suppose it a lie? Is it a common thing for instincts to lie? Do you know of a single case in which instinct in the animal kingdom has been proved to be a lie? Then what good ground have you for supposing that "the instinct of prayer," if it be only an instinct, is a lie?

There have been those who have felt the power of this witness to be so great that they considered it not only sufficient to stand alone without support from any other, but even against what seemed the contradiction of all the others. This is the key-note of a large part of Tennyson's "In Memoriam," as, for example, in this passage:

" If e'er, when Faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice, ' Believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part;
And, like a man in wrath, the heart
Stood up and answered, ' I have felt.' "

And yet it is quite common for infidel writers to treat the witness of the heart as not only of no force at all, but as rather tending to discredit the reality of that which it attests! Whether that be a rational mode of procedure I am quite willing to leave to your good judgment. I have faith, you see, in the trustworthiness of your faculties.

Take next the witness of the soul. Let me explain what I mean by soul. If you and your dog stand on "Table Rock" and look off at Niagara, the two pairs of eyes probably see much alike. But if you be a man of any soul, you will see immeasurably more than your dog sees. I am not denying that in a certain sense a dog has a soul. That is a mere matter of the meaning of the word. The soul I am speaking of now, is what the dog has not, and you have. Perhaps we might have called it imagination, but so many people think that the imagination has only to do with imaginary things, that its associations are misleading. What we refer to is that faculty which recognizes the beautiful and sublime in nature, images the perfect in life, and takes hold, so to speak, of the skirt of the Infinite. That this is a *bona fide* faculty of the human soul no one will deny, though on account of sadly prevalent neglect and starvation it is reduced to very small dimensions in most men. Still, it is a facul-

ty of the soul, and, as such, we cannot suppose it to be an utter delusion. There have been skeptics who have been bold enough to say so. One, in particular, has gone the length of casting ridicule on men's admiration of the starry heavens, which he characterizes as a "luminous eruption, no more worthy of wonder than an eruption in man, or a swarm of flies;" but I doubt if any of us is so hopelessly prosaic as to agree to this. Now, unless this feeling of wonder and awe be entirely false and misleading, it must point us to One above us, in whom all our ideals are realized and always abide. I know that to most people this witness is but a faint one, but it is not from any defect in itself, but simply because this is a part of our nature that is more neglected than any other.

On the other hand, here again, as in the former case, you will find minds that can rest in it, as in itself all sufficient and irresistible. As an illustration, read once more Coleridge's "Hymn before Sunrise in the Valley of Chamoni." By the bye, what utter nonsense that much admired hymn must be, if there is no force in this witness of the soul to God!

We come, in the third place, to the witness of the conscience, with its irresistible conviction of obligation and responsibility. Obedience is due to

superiors; and why am I summoned to obey, if there be no Superior Being to whom my obedience is due? Why do I talk of responsibility if there is no one to answer to? Can it be that my very conscience, the best of me, is a lie?

Here, again, there have been those among our most distinguished philosophers who have rested the evidence for the being of God on this alone. Kant is probably the most illustrious of these. By his critical philosophy he was led to discredit the other witnesses, but when he came to this witness, he found it absolutely invulnerable to criticism, and announced it accordingly as a sufficient basis for faith, even though all the others were silenced. We believe that his critical method was unfairly critical, and that, after all his criticisms, the evidence of all the witnesses stands as good as ever; but it is something to know that such unsparing, relentless criticism was powerless to weaken in the slightest degree, even in his own estimation, the mighty witness of Conscience to the being of God.

We take the witness of the intellect last, because it is the most important; not, indeed, on account of any admitted superiority of the intellect to the other faculties of the soul, but because the great bulk of the discussion is carried on in this region. And here we shall pass by the so-called *a priori*

proofs, because it is only those who are well accustomed to abstract metaphysical discussions who can appreciate the force that may be in them. And there is great abundance without them.

It is one of the laws of our intellectual nature that we cannot think of anything beginning to exist without a cause. We are continually inquiring into the causes of things. And we are making large progress in the discovery of causes. But all the causes we have yet discovered by our search are themselves effects. They, in their turn, began to exist; and hence a cause must be sought for them too. And so the mind is led back, and back, and can find no rest until it reaches the great first Cause. The only way to escape the force of this reasoning is to hold the eternity of the universe; to deny that the universe, as a whole, ever began to exist; in which case it is not necessary to seek a cause back of the universe itself. But besides the great difficulty of believing that the universe of matter is eternal, it cannot be denied that the recent investigations of science all point in the direction of a beginning. The evidences against the eternity of the universe are multiplying every year, and strengthening the necessity for a great first Cause "in the beginning."

Now the only way possible for us to conceive of a first cause at all clearly is to regard it as will—

the will of a free agent. We have said that the causes which science discloses are all themselves effects. But there is one set of causes, and only one that we know, that have no appearance of being effects, that have all the look of originality about them. These are acts of will. Whatever you do of your own will, without any external compulsion, is a cause simply, so far as you know it. What is the cause of this book rising from the table? The hand that holds it. What raises the hand? The arm. What raises the arm? The muscles. What contracts the muscles? The nerves. What stimulates the nerves? The brain. What sets the brain in motion? The will. That is the end of the series. You can go no further. The only first cause of which we have any knowledge is will. And hence we are constrained by the law of our intellectual constitution, if we take it for our guide (and we have no other), to conceive of the great first Cause, as Will in action. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

Again, we are constrained by a law of our intellectual constitution, not only to demand a cause for everything that begins to exist, but to demand an adequate cause. Out of nothing, nothing comes. And if only a part of an effect can be attributed to any particular cause, we cannot rest till the remainder of the effect is accounted for also. Hence it

follows that, inasmuch as there is life in the universe, the great first Cause must be a living cause. And this is altogether irrespective of the question as to whether it is possible to get life produced by a process of nature out of dead matter. I do not believe it will ever be done. But even supposing it was found that among the wonderful evolutions of nature must be included the development of dead matter into living organisms, we should simply have to alter our conceptions of the so-called dead matter. It might still have the appearance of dead matter; but if it were possible for life to be got out of it, there must be life in it somehow, however deep down in its being and far hid from our eyes it might be. Out of nothing, nothing comes. And if anything be absolutely and totally dead, you cannot get life out of it. You can conceive of a living agent putting life into dead matter, but it is clearly impossible to get life out of it in any shape, if there were not life in it previously in some shape. Hence, in any event, it is utterly impossible to escape the conclusion that the first cause of the universe must have been a living cause. And accordingly even the strictest materialists, when they think at all clearly on the subject, attribute to the original atoms at least the "promise and potency" of life. So you see the choice is not between a living cause and a dead cause, but between one living

cause and countless millions of living causes. And whether it is more rational to assume one really living God or countless millions of potentially living atoms, as the great first cause of the system of things in which we live, I think I may leave a candid mind to judge.

Furthermore, this same law of our intellectual constitution constrains us to seek an intelligent cause. Here we might argue back from the fact of intelligent existence, just as we have been doing from the fact of life. In the same way, as the atoms must have been potentially living before it was possible that life could have been evolved out of them, so they must have been potentially intelligent before intelligence could have been evolved out of them. There must always be involution before there can be evolution; and the question still remains, if the atoms are possessed of even potential life and intelligence, where did that potential life and intelligence come from? And here again the alternative is between one living, intelligent God, and millions upon millions of potentially living and intelligent atoms as the great first cause of the universe.

But besides the fact of intelligent life, there are, also, the marks of intelligence all over creation. Here we come to the great "argument from design," as it has been called. But this covers so vast a field

that we must reserve it for separate consideration. There the evidences for the being of God are so multitudinous that no one who has even a small fraction of them clearly in view, without being mystified by the sophisms of those who have tried to obscure their meaning and destroy their force, can fail to be thoroughly convinced. This we hope to see clearly in next lecture.

Meanwhile let us see where we are. We have had the testimony of the heart, the testimony of the soul, the testimony of the conscience, the testimony of the intellect—all pointing in the one direction. Each of these witnesses alone has been found sufficient by some of the greatest and best men that ever lived. And what shall we say of the strength of the evidence when all the four are found to converge to the same result! Remember what we found in regard to the nature of evidence—that the second independent witness far more than doubles, and the third immeasurably more than trebles, the strength of the evidence. And here we have four, not one of which can be impeached in truthfulness without making our nature a lie and the certain knowledge of anything an impossibility. May we not, then, assuredly believe that God is, and shall we not worship and honor and love Him with all our heart and soul and strength and mind?

LECTURE III.

THE WITNESS WITHOUT.

WE have had the evidence for the existence of God from our spiritual constitution, and we have found there at least four independent witnesses: the heart, the soul, the conscience, and the intellect. We now look out into the wide universe to see what we can find there. And as soon as we open our eyes upon the great world without us, we recognize what seem to be unmistakable signs of a designing and controlling mind everywhere. We do not need to go further than our own bodies for evidence which is quite irresistible to the unsophisticated. Study the eye, the ear, the hand, any part of that curious and most complicated mechanism which brings us into relation to the outer world, and the evidence is already complete. Then you may consider the body as a whole, with the wonderful mutual adaptations of its various parts. You may then think of the relation of these bodies of ours to their environment: to the air which we

breathe, the light by which we see, the food we eat, the water we drink, the earth on which we tread, and so on through innumerable relations, every one of which in its accuracy of adaptation is a separate evidence of the consummate wisdom of Him whose thought it expresses. And if in our own bodies we see such overwhelming evidences of design, what shall we say of the tens of thousands of species of living creatures with which the earth is peopled, every one of which is a study in itself? What shall we say of the innumerable varieties of plants, every one of them a closely-packed volume of thought? What shall we say of the wonders which science has revealed to us of the action and interaction of the great forces of nature, such as gravitation, heat and electricity—of the endless variations and combinations of matter, from the invisible atom and molecule to the vast mass of the planets and suns which the spectroscope has proved to be made up of the same elements with which we on earth are so familiar; and of the great laws of order by which these tremendous forces, and these huge masses, and those most delicate and fragile organisms are all so regulated, and controlled, and related to each other, that the vast system is no chaos but a true cosmos? What more can we say with our larger view than was said of old: “O

Lord, how manifold are Thy works ! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches?"

To those who are not acquainted with the direction of recent discussions on the subject, it will no doubt seem very strange that any sane mind should question the force of such evidences as these. But, such is the ingenuity of modern skepticism that, though new investigations are continually adding to the vast multitude of the evidences, yet there never was a time when the conclusions to which they point have been more obstinately doubted. Clouds of sophistry have been raised, and the vision of many has been sadly obscured. And the task for him who would present the evidence, is not to multiply illustrations—this is done as effectively as could be desired by some of those who reject the conclusion, as for example, in some of the fascinating studies of Charles Darwin—but to clear away those clouds of sophistry in which the entire subject has been enveloped. This is what we shall now attempt to do.

Remember, first, that you can not get rid of intention in the doing of a thing by showing how it is done. Even after we have learned all about the way in which a watch is constructed, it is quite as evident as before, that it was constructed for a pur-

pose, and that it would never have been, unless there previously had been a mind to design it. And even supposing some wonderfully complex machine were invented which dispensed with all need of watch-making skill; that all that was necessary was to feed it with pieces of gold and steel, etc., and watches would come out at the other end; would that prove that the watch was not the product of intelligence? By a certain sophistry it could be made to appear so. "You see that boy who is putting the metal into the receiver? Well, he has scarcely an idea in his head. He has no more idea of the mechanism of a watch than a dog has. Yet you say the watches he is making are the product of intelligence!" The fallacy is very transparent. It seems to need little intelligence if you take for granted the system of things ready to the boy's hand. But when you ask how came that system there, you find that in order to explain it, you require to assume not only the intelligence which is expressed in the watch itself, but that which is expressed in the complicated machine by which all the parts are put together without the need of any further skill in the process. Suppose now, finally, that a machine were constructed that did not even need feeding, that could select and attract its own materials and carry on the whole

process without either an engineer or even a boy to attend to it. Would you say that the watches made by such a machine were produced without intelligence? Is it not evident that the more you dispense with the skill of an artificer in the process, the more need is there for a high degree of intelligence in the original invention? I have chosen the good old watch illustration, just because it has been so much objected to. It has been objected to as leading to a pitiable "carpenter theory" of the world, as Herbert Spencer calls it, as if the Deity were some great man standing outside of his work, and making it as a carpenter makes a chair or a watchmaker a watch. And the objectors suppose that as soon as they have shown that the work is not done from without, but as it were from within,—that as soon as they have shown an array of blind forces busily at work producing the result without intelligence, they have got rid of the argument altogether; whereas the simple truth is, they have only added so much to its force. It is not so immediately apparent, because the forces which you see actually working are unintelligent; but very little reflection is needed to make it evident that back of these unintelligent forces there must have been a designing mind that set the whole train in operation.

Suppose, now, we drop the illustration of a watch and take, instead, an apple. An apple certainly looks as if it were something more than a chance combination of particles of matter. It looks as if the different parts of it were adapted to each other, and as if the whole of it were intended for some use or uses. Now how does it affect the question to show that the apple is the product of certain un-intelligent forces in the tree itself? It only shows that the tree needs to be accounted for as well as the apple. And how does it affect the question to know that this wonderful apple-making machine (for it is this, though it is much more than this) feeds itself and runs itself? The only difference it makes is that the self-feeding and self-running have to be added to the evidences of intelligence in the whole phenomenon.

Now apply this to Prof. Tyndall's famous attempt to construct (in theory) the eye by means of the action of light, causing first a slight bulging of the epidermis, and then "through the operation of infinite adjustments" at length reaching the "perfection it displays in the hawk and the eagle." Most unsophisticated people would think it a most absurd attempt to explain the formation of the eye. But even supposing it were quite correct, would it take away the evidence of an intelligent mind in

designing and producing the eye? What about the life, and light, and the many complex conditions which he classes together as environment, all which he needs to start with? Give me the right kind of material and the right kind of environment, and I will make watches without any effort of mind quite as well as Prof. Tyndall can make eyes. And then after he gets the right kind of material and the right kind of force and the right kind of environment, he still needs further, "infinite adjustments." I use his own phrase "infinite adjustments." Where does he get any adjustments if, as he holds, nothing is adjusted? Ah! these words "environment" and "adjustment" are very convenient. They seem to be so simple. They seem to make a thing so plain. Whereas they really leave the problem as complex as ever, and as much as ever in need of intelligence to account for it. And yet how many unreasoning people are there who think that Prof. Tyndall has accounted for the wonderful mechanism of the eye without any intelligent cause by saying that it is due to infinite adjustments, by an adjusted light, upon an adjusted epidermis, in an adjusted environment! Is it not manifest that there is nothing in all these phrases but a fog of sophistry, and that the evidence which the eye furnishes of intelligence in the Creator is left as strong as ever?

Remember, in the second place, that you can not explain complexity by putting it so far away that you can no longer discern it. A considerable degree of skill is required to construct a great balloon. And as you look at it upon the ground, it is quite a complex mechanism. But after it has sailed away up until it is nearly out of sight you lose sight of all the complexity of its construction, and, for all you can see, it would require no skill to make it. But no one in his senses would say that as soon as it got nearly or quite out of sight all evidence of intelligence in its construction was gone. We shall see presently how the illustration applies. Here is the evolution theory as given by Tyndall: "Not only the more ignoble forms of animalcular or animal life, not alone the noble forms of the horse and the lion, not alone the exquisite and wonderful mechanism of the human body, but the human mind itself—emotion, intellect, will, and all their phenomena—were once latent in a fiery cloud." Now apart altogether from the probability or improbability of that theory, consider a moment whether it really accounts for the complexity of the universe. It seems to do it. A cloud is to our notion a very simple thing. But what of this evolution cloud? I do not refer merely to its being fiery. That is a very slight addition to its complexity. But think

of the infinity of things that are in it. They are "latent" there, it is true. But what does latent mean? Lying hid. They are all there, only we can not see them. Does the fact that we can not see them get rid of them? By no means. The latent complexity of the far-away balloon is as real as the patent complexity of the near one. And the latent complexity of the evolutionist's fiery cloud is as real as the patent complexity of the vast and varied universe which they say has been evolved out of it. And if we wanted crowning evidence of infinite intelligence, we should ask nothing more overwhelming than the fact of the existence of such a fiery cloud, with such wonderful complexity and potency lying hid in it.

Herbert Spencer says (in his "First Principles"), and the long words give an air of very great wisdom to the saying: "The transformation of an indefinite, incoherent, homogeneity into a definite, coherent heterogeneity, which goes on everywhere * is consequent upon certain simple laws of force;" which being translated means this: The simple is constantly being changed into the complex by mere force (without intelligence). Now let me ask your attention while I expose the fallacy here. The idea is that by tracing back, for example, all the forms of animal organism to simple protoplasm, as evolu-

tion seeks to do, and many think it has done, you have no longer to account for the complexity of eyes and ears and hands and feet and so on, but only for the simple structureless protoplasm out of which all have been evolved. But what do "simple" and "structureless" mean as applied to protoplasm? Do they mean really simple and really structureless? Nothing of the kind. They mean simple and structureless so far as our eyes aided by our microscopes can see. No further. And the more thoughtful of our evolutionists are beginning to acknowledge this. As evidence let me quote from the inaugural address of President Allman at the last meeting of the British Association: "Of two particles of protoplasm between which we may defy all the power of the microscope, and all the resources of the laboratory to detect a difference, one can develop only to a jelly-fish, the other only to a man, and one conclusion alone is here possible,—that deep within them there must be a fundamental difference, which thus determines their inevitable destiny, but of which we know nothing, and can assert nothing beyond the statement that it must depend on their hidden molecular constitution. In the molecular condition of protoplasm there is probably as much complexity as in the disposition of organs in the most highly differentiated

organisms; and between two masses of protoplasm indistinguishable from one another, there may be as much molecular difference as there is between the form and arrangement of organs in the most widely separated animals and plants." You see, then, evolution is not from the really simple, but only from the apparently simple, to the complex. Is the complexity any less because it is "deep within?" Does it explain or even simplify it at all to shift it from organic conditions in which we see it, to molecular conditions in which we cannot see it? Not at all. The wonder remains as great as ever, if anything, greater; and the necessity as urgent as ever for an intelligent power to account for the latent complexity of things which seem so simple and are "so wondrous wise."

Remember, next, that you cannot dispense with intelligence by laying stress upon laws. Every one sees, of course, that original creation is not touched by the supposition of laws. There must be something to regulate before there can be a law. But many seem to think that with the exception of the bare act of creation, the laws of nature shut God out of the universe, and account for all its changes without Him. But what is a law of nature? It is simply a certain order in which things are invariably done. But we have already shown that to

explain the order in which a thing is done does not show that it can be done without intelligence, far less that no one does it. What do these people, that make so much of the potency of laws, imagine that laws are? Are they persons or things, or what? Are they anything else than a statement of the order in which things are done? Take, for example, the law that is made so much of now-a-days: the law of the correlation and conservation of force. What is it? I understand it to be a statement of certain invariable relations that have been discovered among the forces of nature. But a *statement* of certain relations does not surely account for them. It has been well said by Prof. Christlieb: "The old heathen personified the forces of nature and made them demi-gods; we do the same and call them laws. The heathen, however, were rational enough to place these individual lesser gods in subjection to the Most High; while we invest our laws of nature with sovereign power, in whose august presence the very hands of God Himself are tied and bound!" The truth is that the laws of nature are among the very wonders of the universe which need to be accounted for, and which cannot be accounted for without a designing and controlling mind.

The want of time forbids me to take up some

minor sophistries; such as the quibble of John Stuart Mill, that the adaptation of means to an end implies weakness—an objection which he presents as if it were new, and which has been hailed by many as if it were new, though you will find it taken up and answered in so old and well-known a book as Paley (Natural Theology, Chap. III)—or the many appeals to our ignorance by pointing out things of which we cannot now see the use, in answer to which it is enough to say that there are so many, many things in which we can see consummate wisdom, that it is not unreasonable to take some things on trust which we can not see, and join with the psalmist, even though we have to go beyond the region of knowledge and into that of faith in making the ascription universal, “O, Lord, how manifold are Thy works; in wisdom hast Thou made *them all*; the earth is full of Thy riches.”

And now, having reached the limit of time, I am reluctantly compelled to come to a conclusion by pointing out that, though we have been able only in the slightest way to open up the subject, we yet have evidence for the existence of God beyond what we have for the existence of our fellow-men. What evidence have I that you exist; you as an intelligent being, I mean? I can not see your

intelligence. I can not see *you*, strictly speaking, at all. I see certain motions of your body which look like intelligence (though I may not think that all of them do—some of your actions may be such that I can not see much sense in them), and I am conscious of some sensations which seem to be in my ear, and which appear to me to be the result of certain vibrations of the air, of which the motion of your lips and the force of your lungs seem to me to be the cause, and from these material phenomena I *infer* the existence of a spirit in relation to mine. Well, we have precisely the same kind of evidence for the existence of God; and in addition, we have, as we have seen, the witness within us, the testimony of the heart, of the soul, of the conscience, and of the intellect.

How is it, then, if the evidence is so complete, that there can be any atheism? A very lengthened answer might be given to this question, but I can only make two suggestions,—the one looking to intellectual, the other to moral, considerations. The phenomena by which I judge of your existence are all within so limited an area that they can be easily grasped in their unity, and they are so familiar that I can easily explain them as in harmony with each other; whereas, the phenomena by which I judge of the existence of God are so vast and varied and

widely scattered, and many of them so difficult to interpret, that the mind becomes confused by the magnitude of the subject. But, though the reasoning is more difficult to follow, it is precisely the same reasoning, and just as valid, as the other; and though the conclusion is often missed, it is reached (when it is reached), exactly in the same way, and on the same grounds as the other. But besides the intellectual difficulties there are moral difficulties. The disturbing element of sin is one which must not be lost sight of. Men are in danger of saying *in their hearts*, "There is no God." And the all-too-natural aversion of the human heart to God gives only a too sufficient explanation of the prevalence of unbelief in the Divine presence and agency in the universe.

We do not deny that there are difficulties in the subject and obstacles in the human heart; and that is the reason why we hold that, though the evidences for the being and agency, and even for the goodness of God, are amply sufficient to satisfy a candid inquirer, yet there is room and there is need for a revelation, to explain, so far as may be, the difficulties, and remove the obstructions to the knowledge and worship and love of the only living and true God. This we hope to see quite clearly in our next lecture.

SECOND PART.

THE CHIEF CORNER STONE,
God in Christ.

LECTURE IV.

REVELATION OF GOD IN A HUMAN LIFE.

FROM the bed-rock of Theism we pass now to the temple of Christianity which is reared upon it. From the great fact of the universe, that "God is," we pass to the great fact of history, that "God was in Christ." Our former inquiry was as to the foundation of all religion. Our present inquiry is as to the foundation of Christianity distinctively. Let us then proceed to this second inquiry as carefully and as candidly as we can.

At the outset we have to encounter an unreasoning and unreasonable prejudice in the common notion among skeptics, that it is an extremely improbable thing that God would make Himself known in a human life. If any man in the present day should set up the claim to be himself a revelation of God, all sensible people would consider him fit for a lunatic asylum. And why, they say, should we treat such a claim any differently from the mere fact of its being made long ago? Which

would be sensible enough if there was nothing but the *mere* fact of its being made long ago. But what if there be so many facts and considerations in the case of the claim advanced by Jesus of Nazareth, that no man who allows these facts and considerations their proper weight, can fail to recognize that His claim is unique and irresistible! Some of these many facts and considerations we shall present further on. Meantime what we propose to do is, to show that there is no improbability in God's revealing Himself in a human life, but that it is just what, from an intelligent view of man and his environment, we should naturally and reasonably expect.

We have seen that the revelation which God has given of Himself in nature and in the soul of man is sufficient to prove His existence and agency, "His eternal power and godhead;" but it is not sufficient to satisfy the craving of his nature, and meet the wants which spring out of his circumstances. Even the intellect requires something more definite in order to a clear and abiding conviction of God's personality. We have seen at the close of the last lecture that, though the personality of God is revealed to us in the same way as the personality of our fellow-men, yet the tokens of it are distributed over so wide an area, and many of

them so difficult to interpret, that the mind is apt to be bewildered and lost. We have a touching illustration of this in the cry of Job: "Behold I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." And it is a well-known fact, that those who reject the revelation of God in Christ are very apt to lose their conviction of His personality. Hence the deification of natural laws; hence Pantheism; hence, too, Agnosticism. Hence also such speculations as that of Matthew Arnold about "the power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." The intellect then craves and needs a definite revelation of personality.

The conscience, too, craves additional light. We cannot think of the God of the universe as anything but a just God. Yet how many things are there which it seems impossible to reconcile with justice. And then there is sin. What are we to do about it? Here, then, you see there are two great questions awaiting solution. How can God be shown to be just with man? And how shall man be just with God? To these questions nature gives no answer; and the conscience cries out for a revelation.

Then there is the cry of the heart. There are

many things in nature that tell of divine goodness; but then there are so many things which seem to contradict them. And even though goodness were proved, the heart wants more, it craves for love. And can it be, that the God who has implanted this great, this seemingly divine love in my heart is a stranger to it Himself? Nature seems a revelation of law; and the heart inquires, may there not be also a revelation of love?

Finally there is the cry of the soul.

“Here sits he shaping wings to fly;
His heart forbodes a mystery;
He names the name, Eternity:
That type of Perfect in his mind
In Nature can he nowhere find.”

And shall it not be found at all? And shall the veil which hides the eternal world remain forever drawn? Must it be that we shall have no hint of what the future life shall be, or even any assurance whether it shall be at all?

Such considerations as these are often brought forward as arguments against the existence of God. But it is manifest that in such a connection they are out of place. They are all appeals to our ignorance; and as we have seen, we have no right to let what we do not know disturb what we do know. But as we are using them now, they are not an ap-

peal to ignorance, but an appeal *from* ignorance, calling for more light. While they by no means discredit what we otherwise know about God, they do show very clearly that the light of nature is not sufficient, and that therefore we may reasonably expect some further revelation. We sorely need some revelation which will be not only as valid, but as definite and intelligible as is the revelation which we make of ourselves when we speak to one another, or as near it in definiteness and intelligibility as the nature of the case will admit of.

And now the questions come: Can God give such a revelation? And will He give it? That He can do it no believer in the existence of God can deny. "He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" He that has given us the faculty of speech, can He not speak to us? Of course He can, if he will. But will He? No one can tell certainly; because He is a free agent. But if God is just and kind, as we cannot help believing Him to be, if we believe in God at all (for belief in an unjust and unkind God would be manifestly worse than atheism itself), if He is just and kind, we have every reason to believe that He will. And all the analogy of nature is in favor of it. Wherever there is a mouth, there is something to fill it; wherever there is a want, there is some provision for its supply, and when every part

of man's spiritual nature cries out for a definite revelation of God, surely it is not unreasonable to suppose that it may be forthcoming.

We see then that it is not only not improbable, but in the highest degree likely, that God should add some revelation to that which nature supplies. It remains to be seen whether it is probable that such a revelation should be given in a human life, such as was that of Jesus of Nazareth.

In order that we may be prepared intelligently to consider this question, let us inquire into the necessary conditions of God's revealing Himself to man. What must God do in order to bring His personality distinctly within the range of human knowledge? Two conditions are necessary. First, self-limitation. God is infinite, we are finite. The finite can not grasp the infinite; and accordingly the revelation must be through the medium of some finite representation. But not only is self-limitation necessary; there must also be condescension to the limits of the human faculties. There might have been many ways of revelation through the medium of the finite, which would have been quite out of the reach of our faculties. The revelation which God will make of Himself, therefore, must be in terms of that which is already known. Not only was it necessary that the revelation should

be given in some finite form, but in some familiar form. Not only must it be something we could by possibility grasp, but something we could readily understand.

You see, then, that the revelation, if made at all, must be made through the medium of some of the finite things with which we are familiar. Now, of all these things, which would you consider the most likely? You would certainly expect that use would be made of that which was superior rather than of that which was inferior. Manifestly the higher in the scale of being, the better for the purpose. Well, what is the highest thing in the scale of being that you familiarly know? Is it not a human life, a pure and true human life? From this it follows that a human life, such as that of Jesus of Nazareth was, is the best conceivable medium for the revelation of God.

As this is a matter of very great importance, let me illustrate it a little further. Let us for the moment put ourselves in the skeptical attitude of one of the disciples of Christ when he said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The difficulty of Philip, you see, is just the difficulty which many have at the present time. It did not satisfy him to have the existence of a Father in Heaven as a matter of faith; he wanted it as a matter of

knowledge. "If He exists let Him show Himself," he pleads. Reasonably enough, we say. It is quite reasonable that our Father in Heaven should take some means of showing Himself to us. Well, then suppose some manifestation is expected, of what nature may it be? To be quite satisfactory, it must to some extent, come within the range of our senses, and best of all if it come within the range of sight, according to the common proverb, "seeing is believing." Well, what kind of a shape do you think such a skeptic as Philip might reasonably expect to see? Of all the shapes you can think of, which would be the most appropriate? To this there can be only one answer. If any shape at all was to be expected, it must, beyond all doubt, have been that of a man; because it is the noblest and most expressive form we know anything about. Where do you look for the highest efforts in art—in painting for example? Is it in dealing with the lovely landscape, or with the tossing sea, or with the golden clouds of sunset? Or the chosen fields of Sir Edwin Landseer and Rosa Bonheur,—are these the highest fields of art? Is there not one department which stands above them all—the delineation of "the human face divine?" Higher than this art cannot go. Our artists paint angels, it is true, but is it not with human faces

that they paint them? As for the wings, it is a question whether they would not be better angels without them. The art, at all events, in painting a good angel is not in producing the wings, but in drawing the face and the form. It is in that which is human in the picture, that the glory and the beauty are found. If, then, any form was to be expected at all, reason would undoubtedly declare it must be the form of a man. But again, surely, it would not be a dead shape, like a statue or a picture, or a lifeless spectral form, that a reasonable man would expect to see as a manifestation of the living God. Surely it would be not merely the shape of a living thing, but a living shape. Clearly so. Well then, what have we come to? A form is expected? Yes. Of a man? Yes. Living? Yes. Why, what is that but just a man? And there he is! There He stands, eyes beaming with highest intelligence, face wreathed in the most attractive smile, heart beating with the warmest love, voice soft and tremulous with suppressed emotion, as in tenderest tones He speaks and says, in answer to the skeptical disciple's appeal: "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Suppose, now, we approach the subject on an-

other side. What is wanted is a revelation of God as near as possible in definiteness and intelligibility to the revelation which we make of ourselves to one another. Well, how do we get to know one another? Let us try several ways and see which is the best and most promising. Can you get to know a man by seeing specimens of his workmanship? Not well. If you go into a carpenter-shop when the carpenter is not there, you can learn something about the man no doubt. You can judge somewhat of his skill; and, after you have looked all around and examined as carefully as you can every specimen of his handicraft you can find, you may be able to tell something about his hands and a little about his head; but you can scarcely say that you know *him*. Or, if you go into an artist's studio when the artist is not there, and look at his works as they are disposed about the room, you may be able to pronounce some opinion on the artist, but you can scarcely say you know the man. It is only a very little way that the sight of a person's works will carry you in getting to know him.

Will it do to tell us words he has spoken? This is a good deal better. You can learn a great deal more about a person from the words he speaks than from the things he makes. From written words you can learn something. From spoken words you

can learn more. But even words, however much of revelation there is in them, are not the ultimate revelation of a person. If all you know of a person is simply what he says, your knowledge is still imperfect.

What is wanted besides? You want to know how he acts. Besides his works and his words, you want to see his doings, his conduct day by day. That is the ultimate revelation of a man. To know him thoroughly you must have him live before you, you must see how he bears himself amid the vicissitudes of life, in its trials and temptations, its joys and sorrows. To what does all this bring us? Just to the same point which we have reached already by other roads: that if we are to have a revelation of our Father God, such as our nature craves and needs, it must be in a life, a life like to our own—a human life.

You see, then, how unreasoning and how unreasonable is the prejudice so common among skeptics, that it is an extremely improbable thing that God would reveal himself in a human life. It is just the reverse. It is extremely probable on principles of reason alone.

It is true, indeed, that there are difficulties involved in the thought of "God manifest in the flesh." How could it be otherwise? But it will be found that all these difficulties resolve themselves

into the necessary conditions of revelation with which we set out, viz., self-limitation, and condescension to our weakness. These conditions, of course, limit the extent of the revelation. For example, we cannot say that in the man Christ Jesus there was any revelation of the omnipresence of God. The self-limitation involved in the revelation rendered that an impossibility. And in the same way we can not say that the human weaknesses of Jesus of Nazareth were a revelation of God. These were a part of the necessary condescension to meet our wants. The special character of the revelation of God that comes to us through the human life of Christ is a revelation of the mind and heart of God, a revelation of law and love. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And a human life was an abundantly adequate medium, and not only so, but the best conceivable medium for revealing these.

One word as to the charge of anthropomorphism, *i. e.*, the supposed error of constructing the idea of God out of human attributes. In order to keep clear of danger in this direction, we have only to distinguish between the attributing to God of human imperfections and weaknesses, which Christianity never does, and the attributing to Him of perfections which the human mind can conceive in-

deed, but cannot claim as properly its own. It is quite true we must get our first ideas of power and wisdom and love and all the rest, from our own hearts; but far from its being unreasonable to ascribe all these in their perfection to the Divine Being, the very fact that we have the conception of the infinite and the perfect in connection with these, points, as we have already seen, to One in whom all these ideals are realized. And if, as our Bible tells us, and as even reason itself suggests, we are made in the image of God, we have not only a justification, but a *rationale* of the true, as distinguished from the false, anthropomorphism.

We have devoted our attention entirely, in this lecture, to proving that the revelation of God in a human life, far from being the improbable and incredible thing which so many infidels represent it to be, is natural, reasonable, and probable in a high degree. This, of course, does not prove that God is revealed in Christ, but it prepares the way for it. And if we find, as I am sure we shall, that the man Christ Jesus, who certainly claimed to be a revelation of God, gave all the evidence that we could ask of His divine mission, it will be not only reasonable to admit His claim and receive Him as "God manifest in the flesh," but highly unreasonable to reject it. The credentials of Jesus of Nazareth, then, will be our next subject.

LECTURE V.

CREDENTIALS OF THE CHRIST.

LET me remind you that up to the point we have reached in our arguments, no use has been made of any part of the Bible. Passages have been referred to from time to time, but only in the way of illustration; no argument has been built upon any of them. And in this way we have found abundant and sufficient reasons for believing in the existence and agency of God, and for expecting some additional revelation to answer the questions which we can not but raise about Him, and to meet wants of our nature which can not otherwise be provided for; and, furthermore, on principles of reason alone, we have discovered that such a revelation can be better given through the medium of a human life than in any other conceivable way.

And now we are confronted with the fact that one Jesus of Nazareth, who lived a little more than eighteen centuries ago, claimed to bring us just such a revelation; and we have to consider whether His

claim be such that we can reasonably entertain it. This brings us into the region of history, and leads us to enquire what information we can get concerning the life of the claimant. And here we find, among many inferior authors, four who undertake to tell us what we want to know about this life. These four are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They happen to be in our day bound up with other authors in a book which we call the Bible; but we have nothing to do with that just now. Our inquiry has not led us yet to the inspiration of the Scriptures, so we make no use of that doctrine; we simply deal with these documents, as we do with any other ancient writings that have been handed down to us. We know they could not have been concocted in this century, for all through last century there are books which everybody knows to have been written then, that refer to them, and quote from them. And so with the century before; and so back and back, till we come close to the time when they profess to have been written, and then the quotations and allusions cease. So we know that these four books were written by men who lived at or near the time when the events are said to have taken place. Now let us look into them and see if we can find out what kind of men they were. Clearly they could not have been

bad men, for bad men could not have written if they would, and would not have written if they could, such books as these. They were evidently simple-minded men; for, if ever there were simplicity and straightforwardness in literature, it is there. They manifestly were not fools, or there would have been some trace of folly in their books. It seems abundantly evident, and more and more so, the more we examine their writings, that they were men who intended to tell the truth, who tried their best to tell the truth, and who therefore are, in the main, to be believed. They are certainly to be believed in everything about which they had a fair opportunity of judging. There may be some things, as, for instance, where one of them speaks about water being changed into wine, where it would be quite reasonable to suppose, on mere historical grounds, that the author might be mistaken; but, in the main, and on all matters concerning which they had both the ability and the opportunity to inform themselves, we may give credit to what they say. This is all we ask at present; and I do not believe that there is a historical critic of any standing to-day who does not accept the biographies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, at least, as in the main correct and true. And remember, the witnesses are independent of one another, though of course they had com-

mon sources of information. No one who has the least pretension to critical ability will say that it was one man who wrote all the four, or even any two of them. They all differ in style. And then while there is thorough harmony in all essentials, there are those constant variations in detail, which prove that they did not even compare notes so as to insure minute correspondence before issuing their separate works.

Now, beyond all question, as a simple matter of history, Jesus of Nazareth did claim to have come to earth as the revealer of man's unseen God and Father. We have already seen that it is not at all unlikely that such an one as He claimed to be should appear upon earth. But it remains to be seen whether the life of Jesus was in all respects what we should reasonably expect it to be, provided His claim was well founded. Did He justify his claim to be the Christ of God, or was it so little supported by evidence that no reasonable man should pay the slightest attention to it? That is the question for us now; and if we find that He has given us all the evidence we could reasonably expect for the reality of His mission, surely every reasonable man should be well satisfied.

Let us, then, proceed to the inquiry as to what we might reasonably expect in the way of evidence

on the part of such an one as Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be. To begin with, you would not expect anything remarkable in His personal appearance. You would expect Him to be nothing more nor less than a typical man—not one to be exhibited or to exhibit himself as a curiosity, but one who could go among his fellow men without exciting attention by his appearance, or any more attention than a remarkably good man might attract by the observed benevolence of his countenance and the calmness and dignity of his bearing. So you see it would be quite possible for multitudes to see Him without recognizing Him. In some pictures you see the Christ distinguished from other men by a halo around His head. Suppose He had actually come with some such distinguishing halo, would it have been natural? What other emotion would it have excited in the minds of the multitude than the idlest of all curiosity? We might, indeed, expect that on occasion something of the divine glory should shine through; and there are not wanting indications that this was sometimes the case, as notably on the occasion of the Transfiguration; but as a rule, we should expect His appearance to have been just that of a man, a typical man.

And the same considerations are applicable to the length of His life. He lived just the average

lifetime of an ordinary generation. He might indeed have lived on till now. But would that have been at all natural? Would it not have been just as much out of taste and out of reason that He should live to a prodigious age, as that He should grow to a prodigious stature? In either case He would not have been a man, but only a prodigy. If He had either lived on, postponing His death till the end of the ages, or had come back in human form after His death to stay till the end of the world, there would have been this small advantage: that in each succeeding generation some rich people who could afford to travel, would have had the opportunity of seeing Him with their bodily eyes; but everything else was against it, and especially this, that in either case He would have ceased to be really and truly and typically a man; He could not have claimed His favorite designation, "the Son of Man." The fact that there was nothing peculiar either in the appearance or stature or age of Jesus of Nazareth, is not at all against His claim to be the Revealer of the Father.

How, then, is such an one to be recognized at all? The answer seems easy. Though it is not natural or reasonable to expect Him to be taller than other men, it is natural to expect that He will exceed them in wisdom and in power, and, though we may

not reasonably expect that He will live a longer life than other men, we do expect that He will live a better one, even a perfectly holy life. These, then, are the credentials we should reasonably expect: superior wisdom, superior power, and superior purity; and all these so much superior that it would not be reasonable to assign them to mere human genius, human strength, and human virtue.

We shall take the last of these first, viz., the character of Jesus of Nazareth. And here no man of intelligence and candor will deny that we find all that we could expect of such an one as He claimed to be. You cannot think of a single excellence of character that does not shine out in that wonderful life. If you take single features separately, you may be able to think of some of earth's great ones whom you could put beside Him. But, when you take the combination of them all, He manifestly stands absolutely alone. Not only is there not in all history one single person that can stand beside him; but there is not in all fiction a single ideal character that will bear comparison. Even such distinguished character painters as Shakspeare, for example, or George Eliot in our own time, who have had all the advantage of His character to model after, do not in their loftiest creations approach to the elevation and grandeur of

the character of Jesus of Nazareth, as depicted in the simple language of the four Evangelists.

Now consider for a moment what a strong position we have here. We could even build an argument, apart from historical evidence, at this point. There we have before us the life of Christ by Matthew. However it came there, there it is. That life was either a creation of Matthew, as Hamlet was a creation of Shakspeare, or else it is a true portraiture of what Christ actually was. If it was a creation of Matthew's genius, then this Matthew, who seems to have been quite an obscure man, must have had a superhuman genius, so that even Shakspeare himself could not compare with him. Do you believe that? And even if you could, the question would still remain: How could it happen that there should be four men of such transcendent genius at the same time, whose creative powers all led them to produce the same character from different points of view, and yet these same men be all unknown to fame in any other way? The idea is in the last degree absurd. Nobody believes it or can believe it. Since, then, the character of Jesus of Nazareth was not, as it certainly could not be, the creation of these four men, it follows that it is a true portraiture of what this Jesus actually was. And if the very conception of

such a character cannot be accounted for except on the supposition of superhuman genius, how much less can the actual living of such a life be accounted for on any other supposition, than that He who lived it was indeed what He solemnly claimed to be, "the Christ of God?"

The evidence of the divine mission of Jesus, which His character furnishes, is one which grows upon you more and more, the more you examine into it. It is quite possible to read the four gospels over and over again without discovering the wonders of the character which they depict. But let any one make it a matter of earnest thought and careful study, and he will continually discover new features to admire, and new combinations of excellencies that are never found in combination in other lives. Read Horace Bushnell's wonderful little monograph on the character of Jesus (which first appeared as one of the chapters in his book on "Nature and the Supernatural," but has since been published separately), and see if you are not absolutely shut up to the conclusion, which he draws, that the character of Jesus alone forbids His possible classification with men. Being such a man as He was, He must have been more than man; He must have been what He claimed to be. His character is, in the highest degree, a credential of His claim.

From His life we pass to His words. Claiming, as He does, to be the Revealer of God, we should reasonably expect not only a superior character, but superior wisdom. If what he says be poor, empty, or of little consequence, or if it be only a reflection of the mind of his age, with all its errors and imperfections traceable through it, then we may set aside his claim, because his spoken words do not bear it out. But is it so? Do not his spoken words bear it out? Can it not be said with as great emphasis as ever, after so many centuries of progress, "Never man spake like this man?" Take the first discourse we meet with as we turn the pages of the first evangelist, the Sermon on the Mount. Is it feeble? Is it poor? Does it savour of the age when it was spoken? Is it not as fresh as ever to-day? Is there anything in all literature that can be placed beside it? Does not every line of it bear out His claim to speak in the name of God? Or take the last discourse in the upper room, beginning, "Let not your heart be troubled." Where can you find anything in all literature outside of the Bible, that has been cherished as these words have been cherished, or that has brought such consolation to millions of troubled hearts? From first to last the words He speaks amply justify His claim.

Think, too, how easily these words of wisdom

fall from Him. He does not retire to His study (study He seems to have had none) and read what the philosophers before Him had written, and painfully think out a system of truth. He stands on the grassy plain or in the little boat beside the shore, or anywhere, and pours out without the slightest effort, though only turned thirty, such words of heavenly wisdom, as the greatest of the philosophers, after a long life given to study and meditation, or even all the philosophers of the world together, after all their labor, had never been able to equal. Does not this, too, correspond with His claim? He needs no stimulus of an appreciative audience, even, to draw out His powers. When He speaks to an obscure woman, who has come to draw water at the well, where He is resting in the heat of the day, His words are as full of thought and heavenly wisdom as when the great multitudes are thronging around Him. In fact, every time He opens His mouth, He gives new evidence that He is what He claims to be.

Here, again, the evidence grows upon you the more you study it. There is far more in the words of Jesus than at first appears. They are germinal words. They are full of seeds of richest thought. They unfold living principles. The thought is often the deepest when the form is the simplest. Hence

the necessity of attention and study, to be able to appreciate the evidence which His words furnish of His divine mission. Yet how few of the average run of skeptics give any attention at all to the words of Christ; and even the great skeptical leaders will find excuses for passing them by, without any consideration. Do you happen to know how Mill steers clear of all the evidence we have been considering? He does it very easily, indeed. He disposes of it in a single sentence. Here it is: "We cannot have conclusive reason for believing that the human faculties were incompetent to find out moral doctrines of which the human faculties can perceive and recognize the excellence." By that single oracular utterance he disposes of all the internal evidences of Christianity. It is positively all the notice he takes (in his celebrated Essay on Revelation) of the entire array of the internal evidences, the very presentation of which, in even a brief manner, would take a volume. Now let us look for a moment at the reason he gives for dismissing them so summarily, and find out, if we can, what it amounts to. His idea seems to be, that whatever a set of faculties can appreciate, that they can produce. The very fact that the human mind can appreciate the wisdom of the utterances of Jesus of Nazareth proves that the human mind

could have produced them. Do you think that a fair inference? We are all so constituted that our powers of appreciation very largely exceed our powers of origination. You, and I, and everybody can appreciate a thousand things that we never could have originated; and what is true of each individual of the race cannot but be true of the race as a whole; and therefore it is absurd to say that because the human mind can appreciate what Christ has revealed,* therefore the human mind could have originated it. Do you think so acute a man would have set aside the internal evidences in such a fashion, if he had been able fairly to deal with them?

And now we have seen, that the life of Jesus of Nazareth was such as fully to correspond with His claim, and further, that the words which He spoke, as well as the way in which He spoke them, were also in fullest harmony—the one exhibiting a character beyond the range of human virtue, and the other a wisdom beyond the range of human genius. Is there anything more? Is there anything else that such an one as He claimed to be could offer as

*It may be said that in the department of "moral doctrines" our powers of appreciation are not so far removed from our powers of origination; but it must be remembered that the internal evidences are not confined to the superior ethics of the doctrine of Christ, and it does not look very ingenuous to set them all aside by a carefully worded statement applicable only to a part of the whole, and very doubtful even in that limited application.

a credential of His claim? There is. He might exhibit superhuman power. He might do things which were clearly beyond the ability of ordinary men. It will only then be in keeping with all the rest, and in keeping with what we should expect of One who came on such a mission as He professed to come on, if we find Him doing as well as saying extraordinary things. But this opens so large a question that we must take it up separately. This will give us then as our next subject: "The Miracles of the Gospel."

LECTURE VI.

MIRACLES* OF THE GOSPEL.

It is generally felt in these days that the miracles recorded in the gospels, instead of being a bulwark to Christianity, are a burden to it. Instead of being evidence for it, they are accepted as evidence against it. And there are not a few who want no other evidence against Christianity than this. They say: "Look at the fables in these books, stories that nobody would believe, if they were reported as occurring now; we can not believe them, and, what is more, we can not believe the men that would tell such stories as these—the whole thing is fable." And this position is greatly strengthened by the idea which is so diligently fostered in much of the

*It is important to remember that in this discussion it is not necessary to give a scientific definition of miracle. It is enough to know that Christ put forth superhuman power. It is of no consequence whether He used for the purpose some force of the spiritual world operating according to spiritual law and order, or whether He used some physical agency unknown to man, or whether He produced the effect by direct volition without the intervention of any occult agency, whether physical or spiritual; all that is essential is the superhuman power manifest in the result. It would tend very much to simplify this whole discus-

current literature of the time, that this estimate of the gospel miracles is due to superior enlightenment. Lecky's "History of Rationalism" has done good service here. He shows how the belief in witchcraft, and in the foolish miracles of mediæval times, was not really argued out of existence, but simply faded away, like mists before the rising sun of general enlightenment; and it is generally assumed and often stated, that the miracles of the gospel are destined to a like fate in due course of time; from which it follows, that those who now reject the miracles of the gospel are in the vanguard of advancing thought, which is exceedingly flattering, of course, to those who occupy this high intellectual position. It is not at all to be wondered at, then, that many should be eager to step up to an eminence so easily attained.

Now, for the very reason that the whole tendency and drift of the times is against belief in miracles of any kind, it becomes us to see that we do not merely drift with the tide, but look at the matter for ourselves. If the miracles of the gospels must be relegated to the limbo of witchcraft and mediæval

sion, if, instead of attempting to defend some particular notion we may have of the interior nature of a miracle, we would be content with the simple way in which Christ Himself put it when He said, "If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin." The fact is, that many of the arguments supposed to lie against miracles are only arguments against certain definitions of a miracle.

nonsense, let us at all events have an intelligent knowledge of the reasons for so disposing of them. It is not enough to say, "the great nineteenth century says so, and therefore it must be." We object to mere authority, even though it be supposed to be the authority of a century; whole centuries have been wrong before this time. We want reason. And it is to reason as against prejudice that we intend to appeal in discussing this subject.

Let us first inquire how much of reason there is in the almost irresistible prejudice against miracles, which is so widely diffused in these days. We speak of it as a prejudice, not to call it a bad name, but simply to characterize it with philosophical accuracy. It is a prejudice, as all intelligent and candid skeptics will themselves admit. By this we mean that the miraculous facts of the gospel are not rejected because, on examination of the evidence presented, it is found insufficient; but because they are judged beforehand. They are represented as simply incredible. As we said in a former lecture, no intelligent skeptic with any pretension to be considered a historical critic, denies the credibility of the evangelists when they testify to ordinary occurrences; but when the same persons testify as clearly and assuredly to any supernatural fact, even though it be of such a nature that they could not

possibly be mistaken, they are immediately discredited. Why? Obviously because the supernatural is prejudged. It is disbelieved, not because the witness is untrustworthy, but because the fact to which he witnesses is supernatural. It is a prejudice, therefore, strictly speaking.

But a prejudice may be founded on reason. And this one is, to some extent. It is quite reasonable to ask more evidence for a wonderful and unheard-of occurrence, than for something which we are quite accustomed to see. It is right that we should approach the reputed miraculous with a prejudice against it. If I had told you that I had crossed Lake Geneva in a steamer last summer, I should have reason to be offended if you did not believe me. But suppose I told you I had crossed it on foot, I should then have no reason to find fault with you for refusing me credit. We admit, then, not only that a prejudice may be reasonable, but that the prejudice against the miraculous is reasonable to a certain extent.

But to what extent? This is the great question. And we maintain, and intend to prove, that the miracles of the gospel cannot be rejected without carrying this prejudice to an unreasonable extent.

Let us look into some of the forms which this prejudice takes, and inquire into their reasonableness.

There is, first, the position taken by many that miracles are impossible, and that, therefore, no amount of evidence whatever could certify to anything supernatural. This is reasonable ground for atheists, and for atheists only. If there be a God who made us, He can surely heal a sick man without going through any process known to medical art. Our position on the subject of miracles is founded on belief in God; a belief for which we have already given abundant and sufficient reason. It is customary at this stage to deal with Hume's celebrated argument against miracles. But as this has been so often answered, and as John Stuart Mill himself is one of those who show its invalidity on principles of Theism, ("Essays on Religion:" H. Holt & Co., p. 232,) we need not take up time with it.

Again, there are those who say that miracles are to be utterly discredited, because they are an interference with the order of nature. But what if it be rather an interference with disorder? Was it not more orderly, in the highest sense of the term, that a blind man should receive sight, than that he should remain blind? The order of nature, be it remembered, is not the only order in the universe. There is a spiritual order to which we spiritual beings belong. As a rule, the spiritual order requires that the natural order be regular, uniform, invariable.

If it were not, there could be no science, and there could be no guarantee for any enterprise in which free agents might embark. But what if, on occasion, the spiritual order demanded some variation from the customary order of nature? The variation would not be a variation of disorder in that case, but of higher order. This was precisely the case with regard to the miracles of the gospels. It will be found, upon examination, that the miracles said to have been wrought by Christ were never arbitrary, but always in obedience to some higher law. I think it was Jean Paul Richter who said: "Miracles on earth are nature in heaven."

Another reason for summarily dismissing all miracles whatever is, that to admit a miracle at all is to dishonor God, as if His universe needed mending. To this some have replied by referring to such a machine as Babbage's calculator, for the purpose of showing that, though at given times numbers appear out of all previous order, it does not follow that everything was not arranged beforehand, the exceptions as well as the regularities; and so God may have had the exceptional miracles in His entire plan as well as all that was manifestly regular and orderly. But we prefer a shorter and more direct answer, viz., this: That though the universe may need no mending, we men do. Do we not?

Is there no such thing as vice or crime? Do you believe in sin, as an altogether proper and orderly thing? Is there no mending needed there? If you are perfectly satisfied with things as they are, with State street on a Saturday night for example, then you may say that there is no call for divine interference, and no need of divine help. But if you think that men do need mending, and that possibly some of us respectable people would be the better for some mending too, then do not urge this as a reason for putting out of court, without a hearing, those works of healing which the Christ of God wrought for poor, sinning, suffering man.

We come now to the fourth and most prevalent reason for summarily dismissing the miracles of the gospel. It is because all *our* experience is against them. Now this may be and ought to be a reason for special care in considering the question, but it is no reason for dismissing it without a hearing. When a child brought up in the tropics is first told of the beautiful white crystals that fall from the heavens in northern climes, it is quite reasonable that he should be skeptical about it. But when the difference of the conditions is explained, not only is the original improbability removed, but the way is prepared for seeing that it may be, nay, that it must be so. And in the same way, when we

hear of miracles occurring as mere prodigies, without any reason for expecting them, we ought to be extremely skeptical. But if it can be shown that at any time in the world's history there was occasion for them and reason to expect them, the way is prepared for at least considering, whether the statements of those who affirm the very miracles which reason would lead us to expect at such a time, may not be true.

We fully admit that a miracle is an improbable thing in itself. This can not be denied. If it were not improbable, it would not be a miracle at all. But that which is improbable in itself may lose very much or all of its improbability by its attendant circumstances. The improbability of miracles is often dealt with as if it were a constant quantity. The gospel miracles are cast into one common heap with all sorts of mediæval rubbish, and then they are all set aside as alike improbable and unworthy of consideration. Is that honest? Is it reasonable?

The honest and reasonable way to do is, fairly to estimate the probability or improbability attaching to the gospel miracles, and then to deal with the subject on its merits or demerits, as the case may be. We have already admitted that improbability is a reasonable ground for a certain degree of suspicion and incredulity. But it is manifestly unfair

to take the improbability attaching to one thing—a mediæval miracle, for instance—and make it the measure of suspicion with which we regard another thing—a miracle of Christ, for example.

We have said that what is improbable in itself may lose much, or even all, of its improbability by attending circumstances. That which is violently improbable to a limited view of the facts of the case, as when an inhabitant of the tropics disbelieves in snow, may be quite probable to wider acquaintance with the facts, as when the same person learns something of the different conditions of the temperate and frigid zones. Now we maintain that, not only do the circumstances connected with the gospel miracles reduce the improbability which they have in themselves, but they actually turn the scale on the other side. Let us endeavor to make this plain.

We have seen (Lecture IV) that it was highly probable that God should give to man a revelation in addition to that which nature affords, that it was in the highest degree probable that such revelation should be given through the medium of a human life; and further, that it was surely to be expected, that any one sent on such a mission should exhibit, as credentials of his mission, superhuman excellence of character, superhuman wisdom, and superhuman

power. And now, when we find One—the only one in all history who answers to these conditions—One who, in the first place, claims to come in the name of God, and then accredits this claim by just the character and the teaching we should expect, is it, I ask, unreasonable to think that such an One as He should do things that no one else can do? On the contrary, it would be unreasonable to suppose that he should not. Why, then, in the name of reason, should the miracles of the gospel be considered as evidence against it? If such an one as I, whom you know to be no better or greater than other men, were to claim to heal the sick by a word, it would be an incredible claim, and it would be quite proper to dismiss it without any consideration. But is it not entirely different when He who makes the claim is One who shows Himself to be superhuman in all other respects, and especially since He is One who claims to bring a revelation from heaven, which, according to one of the greatest infidels of modern times (Mill on “Revelation,” p. 4), “cannot be proved divine, . . . unless by the exhibition of supernatural facts?” But is it not a most contradictory position to take—first, to say that a revelation cannot be proved divine except by the exhibition of supernatural facts, and then to say that the exhibition of super-

natural facts is the very thing that kills it? Yet that is continually done by the infidelity of the day.

Suppose, now, for a moment, that, after Jesus of Nazareth had announced Himself as the Christ, a poor leper had come running up to Him with the request, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean;" and, instead of saying as our gospels represent, "I will, be thou clean," He had said, "I can do nothing to help you," would it not have discredited His mission? Would it not have been reasonable to argue thus: if He cannot help a leper out of his leprosy, what reason have we for supposing that He can help a sinner out of his sin? Yet such is the unreasonableness of modern infidelity, that He is actually discredited because He is reported to have done the very thing which it would have discredited Him not to have done.

It is abundantly evident, then, that reason demands a fair hearing for the miracles recorded in the gospels. And that is all we ask. Give them a fair hearing, and there can be only one result, as we shall presently see. And herein modern infidelity shows its wisdom in taking its stand on the threshold, putting the whole case out of court, and refusing to consider it on its merits. If the case of the gospel miracles had been a weak one, it would

not have been necessary to resort to so many learned arguments to prove that the idea of miracles ought not to be entertained at all. If the evidence had not been of a very superior kind, it would not have been necessary for the acutest of the opposition to maintain so earnestly, that miracles are so improbable that no amount of evidence should be accepted as sufficient.

In the first place it can be shown, on examination of the miracles, that the hypothesis of the witnesses being mistaken is quite out of the question. As we have said, we could have seen room for mistake in such a miracle as the changing of water into wine, if it had stood alone, but the great majority of the gospel miracles are not of that description. Attempts have been made to show how the reports might have been due to similar mistakes all through, but they have utterly failed, as the great German infidel Strauss has conclusively shown, and certainly he ought to be good authority on that subject.

And when the same Strauss, acknowledging the defeat of rationalism in one quarter, runs up the standard in another, by propounding and advocating his famous mythical theory, according to which the reports of the first witnesses have been cumbered up with fables that in the course of years

have grown up around the original narrative; not only is all historical evidence against it, but the miracles themselves refute it. An examination of them shows that, instead of being excrescences which have been added to the original history, they are all of a piece with it, exhibiting the same elevation of character and the same wealth of instruction which the discourses do. If the miracles had been spurious and the discourses genuine, would not the difference between the two have been apparent? Can you see it? Read Trench on the Parables, and then read the same author on the Miracles, and see if it be not evident, first, that the miracles are as full of meaning as the parables, and, next, that they are full of the same meaning as the parables. And then, after you have read and studied the miracles of the gospel, take a look at the really fabulous miracles, such as are found in "the Gospel of the Infancy" for instance, or the mediæval miracles, or the wonders of modern spiritualism; and you will see that the genuine are as different from the spurious as day is from night. The miracles of the gospel are most appropriately spoken of by Christ and by the evangelists as "signs of the kingdom of heaven," and certainly they do bear the sign manual of heaven upon them; whereas the miracles with which in ignorance they are often confounded

bear the sign manual of folly and fanaticism, miracles of childish petulance in the Gospel of the Infancy, winking Madonnas of the middle ages, table-turning and spirit-rappings in modern times. It is only by refusing to look at the gospel miracles that the contrast can be missed. It is apparent, even on slight examination; and as it was with the character of Christ, and as it was with the words of Christ, so here, the evidence of genuineness and heavenliness grows on you more and more, the more you study the subject.

And remember in this connection, that it is quite enough for the purpose to show that the great majority of the miracles of the gospel have the sign-manual of heaven upon them; for surely it need not be wondered at, if among the many there should be some, the meaning of which is not so readily apparent; just as there are so many things in Nature, the meaning of which it is hard to see. The great majority are works of healing, than which nothing could have been more appropriate. And if you have greater difficulty in understanding such a miracle as the multiplying of the loaves and fishes, consider how much light is thrown upon it by the discourse that immediately follows it. And if you are told, that it would have been much grander to have simply pointed the multitude to

the harvests whitening on the fields, and reminded them of the small quantity of seed from which they sprang, as an evidence of what great things God could do, remember that the very value of the Incarnation, as a revelation, was its bringing into small compass the tokens of the divine agency, so that the connection between them could be readily seen; and in the same way, the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves was just the bringing into small compass and exhibiting, so that the multitude could not fail to see it, the very marvel which the great God is working in nature every year, when from a few small seeds He evolves by natural agencies those great harvests which cover the fields of autumn with their golden robe. The same considerations are clearly applicable to the changing of the water into wine. The God of nature was doing it every year in the vineyards with which every hill-side was clothed; but the process was so slow, that the dull mind could not readily follow it, till as in a picture the great Revealer set it before them. But we cannot take up the miracles in detail. Enough to say, that the vast majority of the miracles of the gospel, if not the whole of them, bear on themselves the sign manual of heaven, and are evidently, both on literary and on spiritual grounds, of a piece with the Life and Words; and, therefore,

we can not reasonably suppose them to be the excrescences of fable pieced on to the confessedly heavenly life and words. And then, beside all, it is as certain as any fact in history that Christ claimed to work miracles; so that you have not only to explain the miracles away, but you have to explain the claim away, before you can account for the facts of the case in any other way than on the supposition that the miracles were actually wrought.

And now it might be desirable to take some single miracle, and look more directly at the evidence by which it is sustained. For this purpose we shall take the Resurrection, as being the crowning miracle of all, for our next subject of study.

Meantime, we are sure that enough has been said to show, that it is certainly not superior enlightenment which condemns Christianity as untrue, because He who lived as never man lived, and spake as never man spake, is also said to have done the works that never man did.

LECTURE VII.

THE RESURRECTION.

So far, we have been considering the miracles of the Gospel in a general way; and we have found that they come before us in such a manner as to merit a candid and unprejudiced hearing. While fully admitting the improbability of isolated marvels or of wonderful stories connected with names entitled to no especial consideration, we contend that it is entirely different with the deeds of mercy attributed to Jesus of Nazareth,—that it is not only not improbable, but in the highest degree to be expected, that such an One as He claimed to be, especially since His claim is so fully borne out by the transcendent excellence of His character and unapproachable wisdom of His teaching, should exhibit superhuman powers in action as well as in word. Therefore, we ought by all means to approach the evidence which is furnished for the miracles in detail, without that overwhelming prejudice against it which would be justifiable, if the person in whose

favor it was adduced was either a weak or wicked, or even a quite ordinary man. We ask no prejudice in favor of the claim; but we do think it is but right that prejudice against it should be dismissed.

Having time only to take up one of the miracles, we choose the Resurrection, chiefly because it is universally accepted as the seal of all the rest. Once believe that Jesus rose from the dead Himself, and it will not be hard to believe that He did almost any other wonderful thing. We might, indeed, conceive of a person who was thoroughly convinced of the resurrection, hesitating or suspending his judgment in relation to one or two of the miracles recorded in the Gospels,—the cursing of the fig-tree, for instance, or the destruction of the swine in the region of Gadara; but the great mass of the miracles, the healing of the sick, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the palsied, and even life to the dead, would seem so natural on the part of One who was manifestly the conqueror of death, as to present no difficulty at all. Connected with its importance, there is another advantage in singling out the resurrection. Inasmuch as it is felt to be the citadel, it has been more desperately assailed than any other. Ingenuity has exhausted itself in efforts to undermine its evidences; and accordingly here, if anywhere, we know that

the very worst that can be said against us has been said.

At the outset we are confronted with the unquestionable fact of the unanimous testimony of the Apostles and early Christians. There was no division among the Christians in this regard. They all united in this testimony, and some of them maintained it through the severest persecution, and at last sealed it with their blood. It may be well to notice at this stage the unfair use that is sometimes made of the doubts which many of the disciples had at the first. Remarking on the statement in Matt. xxviii, 17, that "some doubted," a recent lecturer before the "Philosophical Society" is reported to have said: "Who and how many doubted? What did they doubt? Why did they doubt? If the chosen disciples doubted what they saw with their own eyes, as stated by this writer, may we not be pardoned for doubting?" In answer to the question, "Why did they doubt?" we have only to say, that it was because they were not the credulous people that the same critic, in another part of his lecture, represents them as being. They doubted at first, as any reasonable being would, until he had examined the evidence. These doubts qualified them all the better for examining the evidence thoroughly. And it was only after the evidence

was such as to overcome all their doubts, that they yielded and believed. Will any one pretend to say that they continued doubters? All the disciples were doubters at the first. But they were all convinced in the end. And the very fact that it was so hard to convince them, when they were first confronted with so unexpected a thing as the Resurrection, gives largely increased value to their unwavering certainty ever afterwards, through labors, and privations, and sufferings, and death itself. We have, then, the unanimous testimony of all the Apostles and early Christians, confirmed by the knowledge that their convictions were reached only after serious and, on the part of some more skeptical ones, even obstinate doubts and questionings.

Now manifestly these people either believed what they said or they did not. Formerly the infidel position was that they did not, that they were a set of impostors and liars who manufactured these stories, and, knowing them to be false, palmed them off upon the world. But no intelligent infidel holds that position now. It was found impossible to maintain it, and so it was abandoned. We need not, then, take up time in arguing a point which is now so universally conceded. Only let us remember that this idea of imposture and falsehood is given up and dismissed, so that it can-

not be taken up again as a refuge. When once the idea of intentional falsehood is dismissed, everything that is said on the one side or the other must of course be consistent with the admitted fact, that these men believed themselves what they said.

The hypothesis of fraud being excluded, only two distinct suppositions remain,—viz.: reality and imagination. If not a fraud, the Resurrection must have been either a fact or a fancy. We are trying, if we can, to get away from the fact of it. Let us, then, try whether fancy will account for it. Could it have been a hallucination?

To test this supposition, consider, first, how many must have been under the same hallucination. One person may think he sees something, while what he sees is only in his imagination. But is it usual to find two persons whose hallucinations shall so exactly correspond that their testimony will agree as to what they saw? Did you ever hear of twelve persons that were so deceived by their senses all at the same time and exactly in the same manner? And yet there must have been far more than twelve so deluded, for there were the women besides, and the other disciples, of whom there were 120 in Jerusalem, to say nothing of the 500 (probably of the Galilean disciples) to whom the Apostle Paul refers in his letter to the Corinthians.

Consider next what sort of people they were. We have the writings of some of them, and we have such information about others as gives us some insight into their character. Read Matthew's Gospel, and see if you think him a visionary kind of man. Study the characters of Peter, James, John, and Thomas, and see if you think them just the kind of people to surrender themselves to a foolish delusion.

Consider next in what state of mind they were. Were they expecting a resurrection? Not one of them. Even the faithful women did not expect it. And as for the Twelve, they had all forsaken Him and fled when He was crucified, and when they talked to one another about Him, it was in this wise: "We trusted that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel, but"—(He is dead and buried, and it is all over.) Evidently not one of them was in a state of mind favorable to hallucination.

Consider, finally, what must have been the extent of the hallucination, and you will find that it would be almost incredible that even a single person, however visionary and however wrought up with expectation, should be the subject of it. For it was not only a single sight of Him, or a single interview. There was repeated intercourse for the space of forty days. During that time every conceivable

confirmation was given. They saw Him, they heard Him, they touched Him, they walked with Him, they talked with Him, they ate with Him, they reported and recorded the very words He said; and these words are just as much marked by heavenly wisdom and grace as His recorded words before His death. Can you conceive of any fuller evidence that could have been given of the fact of His resurrection?

Remember here, that it will not do to say we have only their own statements for all this, for that is to take refuge in the exploded supposition of fraud. It is a very common thing for an infidel to give up a supposition like this when argued out of it, and then quietly resort to it again, when pressed in another quarter. Consider, then, I say, not only the number of persons, and the kind of persons, and the state of mind in which they were at the time, but the extraordinary extent of the hallucination, and then say, if it does not require tenfold more credulity to believe in the theory of hallucination than in the fact of the resurrection. If we had had only the testimony of Mary, we might have supposed it was only the gardener after all. Or, if a few of them had only professed to have seen Him once, there might have been room for mistake. But when they not only saw Him, but conversed with

Him, and ate with Him, and verified His identity when doubts came over them, the conviction grows upon you, that they could not possibly have been all mistaken every time—in the upper chamber, on the road, at the table, by the side of the lake, in broad daylight—for the space of forty days. The more you examine, the more you will see how vain it is to attempt to explain the facts of the case by hallucination.

Does this conclude the case for the Resurrection? It could not have been fraud; it could not have been fancy; must it not then have been fact? It would seem so. And yet, in all fairness, it must be conceded that modern infidelity does not allow these three to include all supposable cases. A fourth alternative has been devised, which is neither fraud, nor fact, nor fancy; but a mixture of fact and fancy, with perhaps a little grain of fraud in it to help its plausibility. We refer to the mythical theory. We have already seen reasons for rejecting it, as applied to the miracles in general. But it may be well also to consider how it applies to the resurrection in particular.

Let us first get a clear conception of how it differs from the disproved theories of fraud and of fancy. The idea is this, that those who were conversant with the original facts, without any inten-

tion of deceiving, simply exaggerated them a little, as enthusiastic disciples are likely to do. And when the story came to be told to the next generation, it would be considerably larger than it was at first; and so on, and on, till in a perfectly natural way, without any intentional fraud, but simply by the process of quite natural development, all the wonders of the resurrection story came to the front. Now, it is true that wonderful stories have developed in this way in the early ages of the world, especially in the infancy of nations, and in prehistoric times. Every one knows, of course, that the Jewish nation was not by any means in its infancy, that the times were not prehistoric, and that the conditions in general were not favorable to the growth of myths, least of all of such a myth as the resurrection, seeing that one of the two great parties who alternately held the reins of power (the Sadducees, I mean) had as a principal part of their "platform" the denial of any resurrection, and would, of course, see to it that any such myth in the process of formation was promptly exploded. But leaving these considerations, and many others, let me simply call your attention to one circumstance which renders the mythical explanation of the resurrection story incredible, which absolutely proves that it did not grow up by gradual accre-

tions, from generation to generation, but was firmly believed and fully taught by Christian teachers while many of the original witnesses were still living. When first the mythical theory was propounded, the attempt was made to push the Gospels far down into the second century, so as to leave a considerable number of intervening generations, and afford time for the myths to grow. These attempts have failed. But, even apart from the question as to the precise date of the Gospels, we have conclusive proof that the fact of the resurrection was believed, and asserted, and incorporated into the Christian doctrine, while yet many of the original witnesses were still alive. The First Epistle to the Corinthians is one, the genuineness and antiquity of which even the most destructive of the literary critics of Germany have not been able to doubt. It is as certain as anything of the kind could be that Paul was the author of it, and that it was written at no longer interval from the death of Christ than twenty to twenty-five years. Now, with the knowledge of this fact, read the fifteenth chapter of the Epistle,—that magnificent passage which is so familiar to our ears in the funeral services of all the churches. Now, we know that John was living at that time, and others of the original witnesses. In fact the Apostle himself as-

serts that the greater part of them were living still. Does not this utterly explode the mythical theory so far as the resurrection is concerned? If the original witnesses were still alive, how was it possible for such an extraordinary story to have grown up in the gradual and imperceptible way which the mythical theory supposes? Is it not evident that the very existence of such a story uncontradicted, while several of the original witnesses were still alive and in frequent communication with so prominent a teacher of it as the Apostle Paul, proves that we must dismiss this mythical idea which so conveniently mixes fact and fancy, as another of the many vain attempts to explain away the evidence of the Resurrection? We might have made the case a great deal stronger by taking the evidence which the "Acts of the Apostles" furnishes, that the Resurrection was the main substance of apostolic teaching from the day of Pentecost onward, but we preferred to take the epistle for the reason above given, that the most destructive of the critics have not been able to cast the slightest doubt on its antiquity or genuineness, while they have labored hard, though we believe quite unsuccessfully, to do this for the Acts of the Apostles.

We thus find that the story of the resurrection cannot be resolved into fraud, nor into fancy, nor

into that ingenious mixture of the different elements which enter into the mythical theory. What else, then, can it be but fact ?

But are there not difficulties on this supposition, too ? It is alleged that there are. There is, first and mainly, the improbability of the thing. This we have dealt with already, and we have one word more to say about it before we are done. The other is, the alleged discrepancies in the statements of the different witnesses. It is quite evident that there is not time to go into these in detail. Suffice it to say, that they are just such variations as are always expected when independent witnesses give separate accounts, without any attempt to bring them into verbal harmony. Each of the witnesses gives a very brief account of the occurrences of forty days, and, of course, one leaves out what another puts in, one mentions a circumstance that struck him, another refers to quite different particulars that impressed themselves on his mind, and so on. But in no case has any clear contradiction been established.

Perhaps the most satisfactory way of dealing with this matter in a sentence, is to refer to the fact, which many may not know, that the highest authority on evidence, perhaps, that ever lived, has thoroughly sifted this evidence on the same prin-

principles as are applied in courts of law, and come to the decided conclusion that it is impossible by any justifiable process of legal criticism to invalidate these testimonies. I refer to Greenleaf's work, entitled "The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice." Now, this is no other than the famous Greenleaf, whose work on Evidence has been a standard ever since it was issued, not only in America, but on the other side of the Atlantic. The London *Law Journal*, referring to Greenleaf's work, says: "Upon the existing law of evidence more light has shone from the New World than from all the lawyers who adorn the courts of Europe." And the *North American Review* spoke of him before his death as "an able and profound lawyer,—a man who has grown grey in the halls of justice and the schools of jurisprudence,—a writer of the highest authority on legal subjects, whose life has been spent in weighing testimony and sifting evidence, and whose published opinions on the rules of evidence are received as authoritative in all the English and American tribunals." It is doubtful, in fact, if there ever lived a man better qualified for sifting evidence. Well, this man bent his energies to the sifting of the testimony of the evangelists all through the Gospels,

and especially their testimony in relation to the trial and death and resurrection of Jesus, and the result will appear from the following quotation : "Let the witnesses," he says, "be compared with themselves, with each other, and with surrounding facts and circumstances ; and let their testimony be sifted as if it were given in a court of justice on the side of the adverse party, the witnesses being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth. In the course of such an examination the undesigned coincidences will multiply upon us at every step in our progress ; the probability of the veracity of the witnesses and of the reality of the occurrences which they relate will increase until it acquires, for all practical purposes, the value and force of demonstration."

The more you examine it fairly, the more you will be convinced that the evidence is so overwhelming that you cannot get away from it without the most desperate expedients. When, in the olden time, a far-off claimant for a throne would make good his illegal pretensions, he must wade through seas of blood to it, he must put to death the heir apparent and the heir presumptive, and as many others as lay between him and the coveted possession. Simi-

lar is the task which modern infidelity has to perform before it can erect its usurping throne on the empty grave of Jesus. It must make havoc of all the four Gospels, reducing them mainly to a tissue of lies. It must destroy the historic credibility of the Acts of the Apostles. It must get rid in some fashion of the first epistle to the Corinthians. It must make havoc of every scrap of writing that remains from the first century, which refers to the Resurrection. It must despoil the character of Matthew and Mark, Luke and John, Paul and Peter. It must crucify again the Lord Himself, for again and again while He was alive He said that He would rise again. It must dispose even of Christianity itself, with its fifty-two commemorations of the Resurrection every year, and show how it was possible that such an institution was founded on a lie. It must, in fact, murder history, and murder character, and murder truth. And why? All because the great nineteenth century is supposed to have settled unalterably that it is a thing incredible that God should raise the dead. But may we not, with all due respect even to so great an abstraction as the nineteenth century, ask again the old question: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" What a wonderful resurrection does

He work every year in those very weeks that encircle the glad Easter day! He makes the dead trees and dead flowers to live again, and shall it be said that He cannot raise to life a dead man? True it is that we do not see men raised from the dead nowadays; but neither do we see men like Jesus the Christ nowadays. If he had been only an ordinary man, it would have seemed well-nigh incredible that God should raise him from the dead. But He was no ordinary man. And when you think what sort of a man He was, the probability is shifted to the other side. It was not a *mere* miracle. When profoundly looked at, it was no marvel at all. The Apostle Peter puts it in the right light in his first sermon after Pentecost: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the bands of death, because it was not possible that HE should be holden of it." O my friends, if we would only acquaint ourselves with Jesus Christ; if we would drink in His words; if we would enter into sympathy with the plan and purpose and tenor of His life, if we would gaze on the beauty of His face and fill our hearts with the admiration which is due to the immortal loveliness of His character; if we would get really and truly acquainted with Him, instead of thinking it a thing incredible that God should raise Him from the dead,—we should think it a thing incredible that

God should not do it. We should enter into the true and deep philosophy of the Apostle when he said, "God raised Him, because it was not possible that such an one as He should be holden of death."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who has not mocked us with a myth when our beloved dead lie cold and beautiful beneath our anguished gaze, but, "who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

THIRD PART.

THE COMPLETED FOUNDATION,
God in Christ, Made Known by
the Spirit.



LECTURE VIII.

REVELATION BY THE SPIRIT.

OUR feet are now firmly planted on "the Rock of Ages," which rests securely on the great underlying rock-system of the Divine Existence. We may thankfully accept, as a firm foundation on which to build, the revelation of God in Christ, now fully certified to us. We have seen, first, that it was in the highest degree probable that such a revelation as was suited to our wants should be given; next, that the best conceivable medium for giving it was a human life, and finally that the Lord Jesus Christ, who claimed to bring just such a revelation, gave every credential of his claim that a reasonable man could desire, exhibiting superhuman excellence of character, superhuman wisdom, and superhuman power, and that, to crown all, the seal of God was put upon the earthly life of this "Holy One of Israel," by His resurrection from the dead. Thus is fully justified the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ of God, the Savior of the world.

Let us pause a moment at this point, and see how far we have reached without the slightest use of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and, in fact, without using even as common history any other books than the four Gospels, and the First Epistle to the Corinthians. We have already a sufficient basis for belief of the Gospel, belief, that is, of the great fact, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." There is much of vast importance which we have not reached yet, and even something essential to the gospel in its application to humanity at large, as we shall presently see; but the great facts of the gospel, historically considered, are fixed on a sure basis before we make any use of the Bible as such, and before we even open the Old Testament at all. And yet there are those who will try to make everything stand or fall, with our ability to verify the accuracy of some difficult or obscure passage or passages in some of the many books of the Old Testament—books that have come down to us from such hoar antiquity that it seems almost a miracle we have them at all!

Remembering, then, how much is made sure before we enter upon its consideration, let us pass to the third part of our general subject. It is the

revelation of God in Christ *by the Holy Spirit*. And first let us see the necessity for it.

Let us here recall what has been said (Lect. IV) as to the necessary conditions of God's revealing Himself to man. We found self-limitation to be one of them. And accordingly, while a human life was unquestionably the best conceivable medium of a divine revelation, it of necessity involved limitations—such limitations in particular as are imposed by space and time. The revelation must be given within a limited time in the world's history, and within a limited space on the world's surface. There are those who have made this a ground of objection to Christianity; but a moment's thought would have shown them, that these limitations of which they complain were necessities arising from the nature of the case.

But while these limitations were unavoidable from the nature of the case, we might reasonably inquire whether there might not be any way of overcoming the disadvantage arising from them, so that those, who had no opportunity of holding personal intercourse with the Christ of God, might have their wants provided for. And to such an inquiry there is a perfectly satisfactory answer. While the man Christ Jesus in His earthly life was subject to the usual limitations of humanity,

in time and space, the Divine Spirit in communion with whom He lived, in whose name He spoke, and by whose power He did His wonderful works of love and mercy, was not so limited; and herein lies the possibility of such an extension of the revelation as is suitable to meet the wants of the whole race. We do not here profess to enter into the difficult subject of the Trinity, or to state, far less explain, the interior nature of the Deity. Let transcendental theology deal with that subject if it can; but it does not belong to the humbler and much easier department of the Christian evidences. And accordingly we here go no further than the safe statement, that in the freedom of the divine Spirit from the human limitations which attached to the man Christ Jesus, lies the possibility of such an extension of the revelation as shall meet the wants of the whole world.

So much for possibility; let us now inquire what the probabilities of the case may be. There is one quite simple and natural way in which the benefits of the revelation, given in the life of the man Christ Jesus, might have been extended beyond the time and the country to which He belonged. I refer to the method of publication through the ordinary channels. The extension of His influence beyond the sphere of His life might have been left entirely,

as in the case of ordinary men, to the spontaneous efforts of those who thought His life and sayings worth preserving. Well, suppose for a moment we had nothing more than this; that this was all that could be said of the Gospels and Acts and Epistles, that they were the honest attempts of men who had been powerfully influenced, by the life and words of Jesus, to give the benefit of them to the world. Would that prove that these books were of little or no value? Consider what good opportunity we should have, even in that case, of becoming truly and savingly acquainted with the Lord Jesus. We have, first, four biographies of Him, written by men who had exceptionally good opportunities of becoming acquainted with the facts of the case. We have a large number of His sayings and discourses, evidently recorded and preserved with the greatest care. We have an account of the influence which His life and teachings had upon such men as Peter, John, and Paul. And we have the teachings of those men when they attempted to set forth, each in his own way and from his own point of view, the doctrines of their Master. Is all this of little value? We contend not only that it is of unspeakable value, but that it is enough to give a solid basis for a truly Christian faith and life.

There would, indeed, be serious disadvantages,

and in particular this: that those who take this position could never certainly know how much the original teaching of the Lord Himself had been colored by the views of His reporters. But though such persons could never take an isolated statement as absolute proof of anything, and must ever be more or less in the dark as to the whole amount of the divine teaching, yet if they are honest (and we are presuming them to be so), they may receive and believe enough to give them perfect confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ as a divine teacher and Savior. I say they may, not that they will. The tendency of what are called loose views of inspiration is in the direction of neglect and general unbelief and indifference; but this is not a necessary tendency. We believe not only that there may be, but that there are, not a few who do not believe in plenary inspiration, and yet have a more living and earnest faith in Christ—the Christ of the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles and Revelation—and a greater devotion to Him and to His cause, than a large number of people who are quite orthodox in their belief. Far be it from us, then, to denounce as infidels those who are hindered by difficulties from accepting what we may regard as the truth on the subject of inspiration, so long as they receive the testimony of the evangelists and apostles so far as

to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and do their best to follow in the way which He points out to them as the way of life. And for the same reason we ought not to allow the genuine infidel, or the unwise and unscriptural apologist, to treat the claims of Christ and of Christianity as identical with the question of the literal and verbal infallibility of all the books which are bound together in covers, on which the name "Holy Bible," however appropriately, is inscribed.

But, while we admit that Christianity can well stand its ground and maintain its claim on the allegiance of men, apart from the doctrine of special inspiration, we do not believe that the publication of the glad tidings to the world has been left in this loose and uncertain way. We believe it to be extremely probable that our Father God, who gave the revelation of Himself in the human life of Jesus of Nazareth, would use some means to make that revelation widely known, without the danger of mistake which must necessarily attach to all ordinary means of publication; and further, that He would take into consideration the case of those whom the ordinary channels of publication could not reach, those who lived before the Son of God came to earth, and those who, by reason of distance or for any other cause, were not reached by the or-

dinary channels. Take this in connection with what has been advanced before, and we reach the probability that use would be made of the agency of the omnipresent and eternal Spirit, to make the revelation known beyond the narrow bounds in which, from the nature of the case, it had to be given.

And now, when we turn to the life and words of Jesus as given by the evangelists, we find that He speaks again and again of this very agency in making known the revelation which was given through Himself. The passages are so numerous that we can only refer to one or two as specimens. Speaking of the work of the "Spirit of truth" after He Himself should have left the world, He says (John xvi, 14): "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you;" and again He says, after His death and resurrection (Acts i, 8): "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me." And not only does He refer to the Spirit's witness after His departure from the world, but again and again He refers to His testimony in the earlier ages of the world before His advent, as where we are told (Luke xxiv, 27): "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself."

We have, then, the authority of the Lord Himself for the inspiration of the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New. Hitherto we have been restricting ourselves to the claim of Christ Himself to speak in the name of God. But now, you observe, that claim is enlarged, so as to take in the prophets and apostles in a certain sense. In a certain sense, we say, because no one will claim that apostles and prophets stood in precisely the same relation either to God or to man, as Christ Himself did. He was the revealer of the Father and Savior of the world. They occupied a much humbler position—viz., that of witnesses to Him and to His truth. But the claim is now advanced for them that they were inspired witnesses, so that when we listen to them we are listening not to ordinary men, but to ambassadors of God.

It would now be in order to examine this claim. To do it thoroughly would be manifestly a vain attempt in so brief a course as this must be.

Suffice it only to say that, for the prophets of the Old Testament, we have as guarantees of their inspiration—first, their own credentials, to be determined by examining each separately,* and next, the

*It should never be forgotten that the claim of Christ to be the revealer of God and Saviour of the world is not involved in this question of details. It is true that He affixes His seal to the testimony of the apostles and prophets, especially concerning Himself; but He nowhere de-

seal of Christ Himself, in the references which He makes to them. And for the apostles of the New Testament, we have as guarantees—first, the promise of special guidance, which Christ made to them before His death, and next, the evidence which we have at Pentecost, and from their subsequent lives

finer the nature or extent of their inspiration. He nowhere speaks of them as qualified to teach science, or called to reveal scientific truth, unknown and undiscovered in their day. He never even claims, on their behalf, that they were so raised by their inspiration above the rest of mankind, as to be quite free from popular errors and misconceptions on subjects which do not form part of the moral and spiritual revelation they were commissioned to unfold. There is one passage which looks a little like this, where Christ says: "He will guide you into all truth;" but when we look at the original Greek, we find that it is not all truth, but "all the truth," i. e. the truth in regard to things moral and spiritual; specially, as the context clearly shows, the truth in regard to Himself. While, then, we do expect from those who were under the guidance of the Spirit of God authoritative declarations on everything that pertains to "the great salvation," we do not expect them to throw in here some information on astronomy, there some anticipation of geological discovery, again to propound some advanced theories on politics and government, and further on to show how to divide the electric light and how to construct the phonograph and telephone! When you keep this in view you will see that a great many of the current objections of the day, which are supposed to lie against Christianity, are really only objections to certain theories of inspiration. Take the so-called "Mistakes of Moses," for instance. I am one of those who believe that it is not Moses but his critics who are mistaken. But what if Moses were proved to have made some mistakes? What if he were proved to be mistaken in his geological views? Would the fact, that he knew no more of science than the learning of the Egyptians could give him, militate against his claim to be a prophet of God? Who ever said that one of the necessary credentials of a prophet of the Lord was omniscience? I can not find any such claim in the words of Christ, or indeed in any part of the Bible. How absurd, then, is it to make the claims of Christ to be the revealer of the Father turn on the question whether Moses knew all about geology?

and teachings, that the promise was fulfilled. This double guarantee ought surely to afford us sufficient confidence in the teaching of these men on all subjects which come within the range of their high commission.

Thus, you see, the revelations which came from the Spirit of God through the prophets, not only prepared the way for the coming of Christ, in the fulness of time, but provided for the spiritual wants of those who lived in the early ages of the world; and the unfoldings of divine truth, which the apostles have furnished, come to us with the guarantee that what they taught was not their own unaided conception of that gospel which their Master had preached, but such views of it as were the result of the guidance of that heavenly Instructor, whom their Master promised to send from the Father, to guide them into all the truth. Thus was guaranteed, to all who should come after, a certainty concerning these all-important matters, which could not have been enjoyed, if the promulgation of the truth had been left entirely to the ordinary channels of publication.

The question still remains, of course, as to what guarantee we have that these scriptures in our hands faithfully represent the teachings, first, of Christ Himself, and then, of the prophets and apostles

whose qualifications He guarantees to us. The consideration of this question will come under the next head—viz.: The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Meantime let me only notice, in conclusion, that this doctrine of the Spirit's agency has an application beyond the inspiration of the prophets and apostles. The Spirit of God and of Christ is represented, as not only inspiring prophets and apostles, but as dealing with all men, and ready to guide all who are ready to accept His guidance. Thus a way is provided by which even those may be reached who never had the opportunity of hearing the testimony of prophets and apostles, or of those who learned the way of life through them. It is true that the testimony of those who have themselves received the truth is the great means which God has appointed for the salvation of the world, and accordingly the disciples of Christ are enjoined to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." But, while these are the appointed means, we know that God can reach the hearts of men independently of appointed means; and thus, while firmly holding that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, we can at the same time hold fast the assurance that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him

and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." (Acts x, 34, 35). God can "fulfil Himself in many ways." Though limitation was necessary in order to manifest Himself in the flesh, all limitations are transcended in the revelation by the Spirit. As human, Christ was limited and circumscribed; but as divine, no pent-up Nazareth or Palestine confined His powers. And of this He was fully conscious, even in His earthly life. Looking back to the past, He said: "Before Abraham was, I am." Looking forward to the future, He gave the promise: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." And, casting His eye outward to the farthest limits of the earth's population, He made the marvelous declaration: "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

Well, then, may the great apostle of the Gentiles say, and well may his words go out to the uttermost ends of the earth: "Now, therefore, ye (Gentile nations) are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

LECTURE IX.

THE SIXTY-SIX BOOKS.

WE have seen that, not only did the Lord Jesus give the most satisfactory credentials of His exalted mission, but that the prophets who preceded Him and the apostles who followed Him had His guarantee, in addition to any credentials of their own, for the accuracy and authority of their teaching of "the truth as it is in Jesus." And now we have to consider the question, as to what means we have of access to the teaching of these apostles and prophets and of Christ Himself, and what guarantee we have, that what has come down to us is indeed the very truth which they taught when they were here on earth. The answer to this question will bring us at last to what so many unfortunately are inclined to take first, viz.: the Holy Scriptures as an inspired record of the revelation which God has given to man.

And here we have first to deal with the extraordinary perversity and unfairness, so common in our

day, of treating the scriptures as if the whole mass were only one book. Of all the unfair devices for weakening the evidences of Christianity this is perhaps the very worst. And the strangest thing about it is, that so many good Christians allow it and even insist upon it. So great is the mischief arising from this that it would almost seem a pity, that, even for convenience' sake, the sixty-six books were so constantly bound together in one volume. For not only is there the unhappy result of reducing the many witnesses to one, in the minds of unthinking people, but even of silencing and putting out of court that one. For such unreasoning suspicion is abroad about the Bible, that there are multitudes of people, and even some good Christian people, who would attach a great deal more importance to the statement of almost any author outside the Bible, than of any number of authors inside of it. Show them a fact attested by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Paul and Peter, and they will say: "O that is all in the Bible; give us something outside of the Bible and we will believe it." The Bible, in the first place, stands to them for a single author; and in the second place for a prejudiced author, one who has his own cause to bolster up; and accordingly a hundred confirmations within its covers are not so good as one from the outside

would be. Is it not unreasonable in the extreme?

Let me suppose a case, in order to put the monstrous injustice in a clear light. Suppose that, very soon after the invention of printing, some enterprising publisher had collected all the original materials of any value in regard to the history of the Roman republic and bound them together into one volume, which he issued to the world under the title of "The History of the Roman Republic;" and suppose further that it became so popular, that it was circulated first by hundreds, then by thousands, then by hundreds of thousands, and finally by the million, so that it came into almost everybody's hands. But in course of time, after all the world had become so accustomed to it in its form of a single volume, there sprang up a fashion of skepticism on the whole subject, and everything in the volume was regarded with suspicion; and accordingly the whole history of the Roman republic was called into question. Those who believed it called attention to the many different authorities who corroborated each other. "Here is Livy, who writes about it in Latin. Here is Dio Cassius, who writes about the same thing in Greek. Here are speeches of Cicero that relate to the same events. And here are poems of Horace that could not have been written unless these facts were so." But they were imme-

diately put down, by triumphantly pointing out that all these different authorities were no authorities at all. Why not? Because that publisher and that bookbinder of the fifteenth century had published and bound them up together! That of course settled the question. In the first place it disposed of all the separate witnesses, of Livy, and Dio, and Cicero, and all the rest; for were they not all bound together in the same volume? And in the second place it disposed even of the single witness of the bound book, because it was the credibility of the book itself, which was in question, and, therefore, all that was in the book must be ruled out as the testimony of an interested party. And so it came to pass that, from the single unfortunate circumstance of the scattered materials having been considered by this publisher to be worth collecting and publishing together, the evidence for the history of the Roman republic was actually wiped out of existence. It is to be hoped that what may remain of the archives of the first century of American history may never be bound up in one volume, however large, or perhaps the people of the great future, the twenty-ninth century, for example, may not believe we ever had any history at all!

Let us then by all means remember, when we are dealing with the subject of the Scriptures, that we are

dealing, not with one book, but with sixty-six; not with a single volume, but with a library. Remember, further, that these sixty-six books are not links, but strands of evidence. There is, indeed, a golden chain of sacred history from Genesis to Revelation, so that, in a historical point of view, many of the books of the Bible are links. But, so far as the evidences of Christianity are concerned, they are not links but strands. This can be proved in a moment. The strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link; and if a single link be gone, the whole is useless. Now will any one pretend to say that, if it were proved that the book of Esther had no divine authority, we should have to give up the gospel of Matthew? Would there be no evidence for the divine authority of Christ if the Lamentations of Jeremiah had happened to have been lost? Why, there would be enough to establish the divine authority of Christ if we had nothing more than the four evangelists, as we have already shown; and whatever of confirmation or elucidation comes from the sixty-two other books is just so much in addition. The Bible is not a chain of sixty-six links; it is a cable of sixty-six strands; and if there is such strength as we have found in four of them, what shall we say of the united strength of all the sixty-six?

After delivering the lecture on the "Miracles of the Gospel," I had a courteous, though anonymous, letter, ridiculing the story related in the book of Daniel, of the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace, and asking how I could believe any of the miracles of Christ, seeing they rested on precisely the same ground, *i. e.* the same ground historically, for you will remember that no use whatever was made of the doctrine of inspiration. The letter was evidently that of an intelligent man, and it was apparently the production of a fair-minded man. And yet he said that the miracle of the fiery furnace recorded in Daniel, and that of the healing of the leper recorded by Matthew, were on the same ground, though the authors that speak of the one and of the other were six hundred years apart! Think of it! If it had not happened that Daniel and Matthew had been bound together in one volume for so long a time, it would never have occurred to this good man to say such a thing. Remember, we do not mean to say that a very good case could not be made out for the miraculous rescue of the three Hebrew captives, if that were before us; but to say that our ability to prove, as a matter of history, that the Lord Jesus healed a leper with a word, or fed five thousand people with a few loaves, depends on our ability to prove the reality of a rescue reported

six hundred years before, is certainly very remarkable logic.

We do not deny, indeed, that in a very important sense the Scriptures form one book, but only on the supposition of their divine origin. He who questions their divine authority has no right to deal with them as one book. The very thing the skeptic sets out to disprove is the unity of authorship. He wishes to prove that it is only human, and this he cannot possibly do, if he holds on to the unity of authorship, for no one in his senses can believe that all these books were the production of one man. (How many centuries would such a man have had to live?) Suppose, for example, my critic, just referred to, should undertake to prove that the miracle in Daniel, and that in Matthew, are on the same ground; how could he do it? He could only do it by showing that both were by the same author, which is the very thing that he denies, and which he must deny to sustain his position; for if they were both by the same author, that author must have been God, and therefore, both of them true. The spiritual unity of the sixty-six books will come before us in due time and in its proper place; but, unless we would beg the whole question, we must start with the human authorship in its multiplicity, and see whether we can, by legitimate means, reach

the divine authorship in its unity. Meantime what we have to do, is to see whether these numerous books, which are bound together into one volume and called the Bible, really come to us with the authority of those prophets and apostles who (as we saw in our last lecture) were divinely commissioned and inspired to teach men the way of salvation.

Now, inasmuch as we cannot in a single lecture take up all the sixty-six books and examine them in detail, to find out whether each of them comes with apostolic or with prophetic authority, we shall have to content ourselves with indicating, in a general way, the nature of the evidence. And, first, we shall look at the twenty-seven books which make up the New Testament. It is a common idea that the authority of these twenty-seven books rests upon the decree of some council as far down as the fourth or fifth century. At all events, this idea is industriously circulated on the part of those opposed to Christianity; but I have yet to find the first Christian author, among the Protestant churches, at least, who puts it on this ground. The authority on which the books of the New Testament are accepted is the authority of the apostles; and the authority of the apostles (as we have seen) rests upon the authority of Christ. This makes the question a simple one concerning those books which

were the work of the apostles themselves; as the gospels of Matthew and John, and the epistles of Paul and Peter. It becomes, in the case of these, simply a question of their genuineness. As to the other books, as the gospels of Mark and Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, and the anonymous epistle to the Hebrews (which may, however, have been written by Paul) there is good evidence that they were all sanctioned by the apostles, if not produced under their superintendence. The apostolic authority of the books which afterward were bound together as the New Testament, was carefully guarded from the very earliest times, long before the first council met. Much has been made of the fact that there were disputes as to the authority of certain books; but this only shows that the claim to apostolic authority was not received without good evidence. And these disputes in the early history of the church were only in reference to five of the shortest and least important epistles. From the beginning, twenty-two books were allowed by all to be certainly of apostolic authority; and though afterward there was some debate about the epistle to the Hebrews on account of its being anonymous, and the book of Revelation on the supposition that it might have been some other John than the apostle of that name who wrote it, the very debate

about these books had the effect of bringing out such a mass of evidence in favor of their apostolic authority, that the question was set finally at rest. And thus, after careful examination and sifting, the conclusion was reached that the twenty-seven books, now bound together as the New Testament, had the sanction of the apostles, and therefore ultimately of Christ Himself.

But then we have not the original manuscripts. Certainly not; no more than we have of Virgil, or Juvenal, or Seneca, or any of those who wrote in these times. What evidence, then, have we that our copies are correct? The very same kind of evidence that we have in the case of the classical authors, only ten-fold stronger—for this reason, that the number of copies is so very much greater. We do not pretend that there was any infallibility in the copyists. But, on the whole, the copies must have been wonderfully correct; because among such a multitude there is so much agreement, and the differences are in such little things. Suppose that you had fifty to one hundred fairly good copies of some document, could you not very easily make sure of a correct copy? Even though each one of the fifty made mistakes, they would not all make the same mistakes. If, for example, you found that one of them left out a word, while the other forty-

nine put it in, you would have no doubt whatever that it ought to go in. On the other hand, if one inserted a sentence which the other forty-nine left out, you would be inclined to think that sentence did not belong to the original document. And it is evident, that just in proportion to the number and independence of the different copies would be the certainty that, after comparing them wisely together, you had a correct reproduction of the original.

When, more than one hundred and fifty years ago, it was first made known to the world that the manuscript copies of the Scriptures did not agree in every letter and word, there was a feeling of alarm through all Christendom, and the infidels of the time loudly proclaimed that the end had come, and very soon the last would be heard of the Christians' Bible. It was all corrupt, they said, and there was no guarantee that the manuscripts remaining were at all the same as the apostolic originals. Then followed the tremendous labor of comparing the manuscripts. "Thirteen to fifteen hundred Greek manuscripts" (I quote from Gausson), "sought out from all the libraries of Europe and Asia, were carefully compared with one another, word by word, letter by letter, by modern criticism, and compared, too, with all the ancient versions, Latin,

Armenian, Syriac, Sahidic, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, Slavonian, Gothic, and Persian, and with all the quotations made from the New Testament by the ancient fathers in their innumerable writings." And with what result? The firm establishment of a genuine text, so that still, "over all the world you will see all the sects of Christians, even the most opposite, give us the same Greek Testament, without the various readings having been able to form among them two distinct schools." Thus the very criticism which was expected utterly to demolish the text of the New Testament scriptures has established it upon an immovable basis. There are, as was to be expected, a few doubtful passages; but these are so few and of such slight importance, that they really do not affect our assurance as to the genuine apostolic teaching. If every doubtful passage should be left out, the truth as it is in Jesus would be just the same as it was before. And thus it has come to pass that after this verbal and critical comparison has said its last word, we have assurance made doubly sure. We have, then, the very best reasons for accepting as authoritative and genuine all the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

And then, besides all, the internal evidence corroborates the external. Compare the four apostolic

gospels with similar productions that were issued without apostolic sanction, and what a difference! The merest tyro in literary criticism can see it at once. And so, too, when you compare the epistles of Paul with those of Clement, for instance. Though it is evident that Clement is a good man, he falls so far short in originality and strength of all the scripture writers, that you recognize him at once as an ordinary man. Let any one, of even moderate intelligence, compare the books of the New Testament with the private productions of even the best of men in the infancy of the church, and he will readily see the clear line of demarcation which separates that which is apostolic from that which is private.

The evidence for the prophetic authority of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament is so nearly the same, that it is not necessary to go over the ground. There is, of course, the disadvantage of the greater antiquity of the books, which is, however, to a large extent counterbalanced by the scrupulous and even superstitious care which was taken by all the Hebrew copyists, and the marvelous unanimity of the most opposite sects and parties among the Jews in regard to the text of the Scriptures; and, on the other hand, there is the sanction which Christ Himself and His apostles gave by

frequent quotation, and by the unvarying habit of referring to those Scriptures as the oracles of God. The result of the whole is, to use the words of one who has made the transmission of ancient books to modern times a special study (Isaac Taylor), the Scriptures have come down to us "with an evidence of their genuineness and integrity ten-fold more various, copious, and conclusive than can be adduced in support of any other ancient writing." And thus, without any use of any decree of any council, is satisfactorily answered the question, as to what means we have of access to the teachings of the apostles and of Christ Himself, and what guarantee we have that what has come down to us is indeed the very truth which they taught when here on earth.

Now would be the time for discussing the nature and degree of that inspiration which those prophets and apostles enjoyed, on whom the authority of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments rests. The importance of the question can not be denied. But we hold that it has been very much exaggerated, and that much mischief has been done by pressing particular theories of inspiration, and insisting upon making Christ and Christianity responsible for them. How many, for example, have been led, by popular representations of inspiration, to regard the

prophets and apostles as mere machines, mere amanuenses, mere pens in the hand of God; whereas it is quite evident that, whatever the nature and degree of divine influence may have been, it did not destroy their individuality or reduce their manifold witness. We have already seen how unscriptural it is to suppose that apostles and prophets must have been omniscient because they were inspired. It would seem, however, that any view of inspiration was practically worthless, which admits of errors in setting forth the very facts and truths which they were commissioned to make known. For how then should we be able to distinguish that which comes to us with divine authority from that which was only a matter of opinion?

On the other hand, we do not think it necessary or wise to insist on infallibility in regard to all subjects incidentally touched. Who would think, for example, that it would have been suitable to have departed from current modes of thought and speech, in reference to the stability of the earth, so as to bring the words into agreement with the astronomical reality of the case? We do not think it necessary even yet to do so, and we very properly set down as pedantic those who try it. How much more pedantic and absurd would it have been, when all the world was ignorant of the true facts of the case.

Take the language used about creation as an example. We take it because it is more criticised and objected to than anything else in the scriptures. Now, on the supposition that it was necessary to give men some idea of the divine agency in all the wide domain of creation, there were three supposable ways in which it might have been done. First, all wrong scientific notions might have been corrected. This would have necessitated a long treatise on astronomy, another on geology, another on natural history, with perhaps a lengthy chapter on evolution, long before the world was prepared for anything of the kind. This is what many of the scientific objectors of the day seem to think there ought to have been; but is it not absurd?

Or again, the truth might have been taught concerning God's relation to the different parts of creation, in such a way as to conform to the ordinary notions which were current at the time, the object being, not to correct the science of the period, but to set men right on the religious aspects of the case. This is the view taken by many, and we do not think it especially objectionable. A moment's thought will show that it would have been a much more reasonable and less pedantic course than the other, which so many unthinking people suppose ought to have been taken.

But there is a third way; and we think that somewhere in this direction lies the true account of the matter. The language may have been chosen, so as to conflict neither with the ideas then prevalent, nor with the actual verities of the case. The result would be, that the people who lived during the fifty-five centuries, more or less, before Copernicus, would have some chance to understand it, though of course they would understand it in conformity with their own ideas on scientific subjects; that is to say, they would get true religious ideas from it, but their scientific notions would remain unchanged. In such a case, however, when the scientific truth was at last discovered, there would at first be an impression, that the Bible was on the side of the old ideas; but, on close examination, it would be found that, while nothing had been said to disturb the minds of men when there was no occasion for it, and only harm could result from it, the language used was really such as to be in harmony with the actual facts of the case.

This view of the case I am disposed to take, not because I think the second a dangerous or unworthy view, but because I can not otherwise account for the many wonderful harmonies with science, which careful investigation has brought out. Let any one read the works of such eminent scien-

tific men as Dawson or Dana, which bring out the wonderful harmonies of that old record with modern science, and he will see reason for believing that, however little the original author of the first chapter of Genesis may have known of science, he was so guided by some heavenly inspiration as to "build better than he knew." This illustration may serve to show, that the relation of inspiration to the science of the time, when the different scriptures were produced, may well be left an open question, so long as the plenary view is held in relation to the great subjects and objects of revelation, as set forth in that passage of scripture which is more explicit than any other on the subject: "The holy scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished"—not unto all scientific disquisitions—but "unto all good works."

LECTURE X.

THE ONE BOOK.

In dealing with the scriptures as ordinary productions, so as to ascertain their value and credibility, historically considered, we have seen that it is unfair to treat them as if the whole formed only one book. Remember that there is no question as to the human authorship. And so long as we are dealing with these books as the productions of human authors, it is manifestly unjust to disregard the confluence of testimony from so many different points. But, while we never dream of denying the human authorship, we maintain that this is not the whole account of the matter, that there is a divine element running through them all, and that, therefore, the boards of the book binder are not the only bond which binds these different books together into unity. The multiplicity of the books is a patent fact, which every one can see who has only common sense enough not to confound together

authorship and book-binding, and which would never be forgotten, if it were not convenient sometimes to do so, in order to weaken the historical basis of Christianity. But the unity of the books is something which lies deeper, and which requires some power of appreciating spiritual and divine things to recognize; but when once it is recognized, it adds so immensely to the strength of the historical argument as to give perfect repose to those who are fairly brought face to face with it. We can as usual only indicate in briefest outline the nature of the evidence, which is so copious, that almost every page of the Bible is lighted up with it, for those who have eyes to see.

Keeping in mind the evidence we have from history that these scriptures now in our hands have come to us with the authority of the prophets and apostles, guaranteed by Christ Himself, it is now in order to look into them, and see if their contents correspond with what we should expect of writings so highly authenticated. You will see that we are now in the same attitude in which we found ourselves in dealing with the second part of our whole argument. After satisfying ourselves that the claim was distinctly made, on behalf of Jesus of Nazareth, that He was the Messiah sent to reveal the Father, we inquired how His life and words bore

out the claim. Now, in this third part of the argument, having satisfied ourselves that these books before us are the very books which come to us with prophetic and apostolic authority, we now proceed to inquire how far an inspection of their contents bears out their claim. And here again we shall follow the same method. We shall raise the question as to what we should reasonably expect of such books; and if we find all reasonable expectations realized, surely it will be but fair to grant that the claim is established.

What, then, may we reasonably expect of these books, if it be true that they come to us, not as mere private productions, but by inspiration of God?

1. We should expect that, amid all diversity of matter and of form, there would be unity of spirit. And is it not so? Think for a moment how appropriate is the name "Holy Bible" as a title of the entire collection. Matthew Arnold has shown how the idea of righteousness is the central idea of the Old Testament, and he is correct as far as he goes; and it is well worth pondering how far this single fact may go toward proving the presence of a divine element throughout. But the fact is much stronger than as Arnold puts it, for it is not righteousness in the common acceptation of the word,

which might readily be supposed to cover only those virtues, which the common conscience of mankind, always and everywhere, more or less demands; but it is holiness, something much higher, purer, and more comprehensive, which is the keynote of the Bible from beginning to end. Even in the rude Mosaic age, when the state of society was such, that many things far from ideally right had to be allowed "for the hardness of their hearts," when many of the political regulations reflected the imperfect spirit of the times, dealing as such regulations ought always to deal, with the practicable rather than the ideal,—even then we see, shining on the mitre of the high priest, the plate of pure gold with this inscription: "Holiness to the Lord." And the attentive student finds the conviction growing upon him that, while the external history was very much what would be expected of the age, and the political regulations had to a certain extent to conform thereto, yet, "the law" proper, both the moral and ceremonial branches of it, held up, as an ideal before the people, nothing short of perfect holiness. And the keynote struck by the law is followed out by all the prophets, taken up in a tenderer, sweeter strain by Christ Himself, and prolonged by the holy apostles, until at the close of the book of Revelation, we are introduced into the

holy city, "where there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth," but over which reigns the "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." Can you fail to recognize the unity here? And, observe, it is not mere unity, but a unity of the most elevated kind, having the divine signet upon it; for, indeed, it is a question whether this idea, which runs like a golden thread through all the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, ever entered into the minds of the most cultivated nations of the ancient world, or into the mind of man at all from any other source.

Again, there is not only one purpose, the loftiest, and purest, and noblest that could be conceived, running through all the scriptures, but there is one plan for the realizing of this purpose. When we look at the means provided for leading men to holiness, we find, not a great many different suggestions from different minds, as we should expect from authors so diverse in their talents, temperaments, education, and surroundings, and so far separated from each other in time; but one consistent plan of a kingdom of God, the standard of which is holiness, and its method mercy,—mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other, as it is put in the expressive language of the 85th Psalm. This wonderful unity is

one which would require volumes to develop, but we can only suggest it here.

And in the same way it will be found, that all the main thoughts which are expressed by the different authors on the great subject of revelation, such as God, man, duty, goodness, sin, salvation, instead of presenting that conflict which you always find, when human philosophy without special divine aid attempts to discuss such questions, are so fully in accord that, as we have seen, it is difficult, even for those who deny the divine element in the scriptures, to avoid treating the whole as if it were the production of one man.

Finally, there is that most wonderful unity of all, referred to by our Lord himself, which appears when you recognize the great fact, that all the manifold witness of the books converges on Christ. Here, again, the field is too wide to enter upon; but those who examine it will find it a most fruitful field of investigation. And so conclusive is the argument based upon it, that the only thing infidelity can do in the matter is to take up, in succession, the most striking passages which set forth the hope of a coming Savior, and explain them away as best it can—a task which must remain forever hopeless, for this most weighty reason, that the ancient Jews themselves understood them in their Messianic

sense. (For a full and learned presentation of this subject, see Westcott's "Introduction to the study of the Gospels," Chap. II.) And it only shows the desperate straits to which infidelity is reduced in dealing with this subject, when its advocates are constrained to impose a forced and unnatural meaning on a whole series of passages in different books of the Old Testament, though the testimony of those who lived nearest the time is against them, and though Christ Himself, whom they profess to regard as the most intelligent Jew of his age, understood and expounded them as applying to Himself. As for the modern Jews who reject Christ, they of course join with the infidels in getting rid of those passages, for the very good reason that it is only in this way that they can reject the New Testament while retaining the Old. Thus, all through the Old Testament, there is a convergence of hope, looking for the coming Christ, and all through the New there is a convergence of faith, resting on the Christ who has come and fulfilled "the hope of Israel,"—a unity which fully harmonizes with the claim the apostle Peter advances on behalf of the prophets, when he speaks of them as "searching what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

Thus, in every way, the unity of spirit, which the theory of inspiration calls for, is fully borne out by a careful inspection of the numerous books of the Old and New Testaments.

2. Another thing we should expect, if the claim of inspiration is well-founded; that, though the authors, as men, must necessarily have been moulded and controlled by their times and surroundings, yet their productions would have a large element of universal adaptation in them. And is it not so? Is it not so, to a degree that is altogether unaccountable, apart from some influence of the Spirit of God?

Think, first, how every part of our complex nature is powerfully appealed to: the conscience, the intellect, the affections, the imagination, the will. Read Dr. Hopkins' fifth lecture on the "Evidences," if you wish to see how much there is in this one thing, which we can only mention in passing.

Think, next, of the adaptation to different classes of men. Have not the most cultured and the most simple-minded, the highest and the lowest, the richest and the poorest, found here, as nowhere else, a satisfaction for the wants of their natures? It is to no purpose to point to any number of cultured persons who reject the Bible, and speak slightingly of it; for the mere fact that they reject it is a sufficient reason why they can not be expected to appreciate

it. The question is not, what satisfaction it gives to those who will have nothing to do with it, but how it meets the wants of those who put it to the proof, who take it as a lamp to their feet and a light to their path; and it can not be denied that, while one of the glories of the gospel is, that it is preached specially to the poor, and another is, that even the little children have their portion in it, and quite a large one too, as our Sunday-school experience fully shows, many of the most scholarly and highly-cultivated of men have confessed its unrivaled adaptation to the wants of their own natures.

Think, further, of its adaptation to all the different circumstances of life. All experienced Christians can set their seal to the following testimony of Archbishop Trench, in his lecture on the inexhaustibility of Scripture: "What an interpreter of scripture is affliction! How many stars in its Heaven shine out brightly in the night of sorrow or of pain. . . . What an enlarger of scripture is any other outer or inner event which stirs the deeps of our hearts; which touches us near to the core and centre of our lives. Trouble of spirit, condemnation of conscience, pain of body, sudden danger, strong temptation—when any of these overtakes us, what veils do they take away that we may see what hitherto we saw not; what new do-

mains of God's word do they bring within our spiritual ken! How do promises, which once fell flat upon our ears, become precious now, psalms become our own, our heritage forever, which before were aloof from us! . . . How much, again, do we see in our riper age which in youth we missed or passed over. And thus, on these accounts also, the Scripture is well fitted to be our companion and do us good all the years of our life."

Let us still further think of its adaptation to different nations and races of men. Our religion is really the only catholic religion, our Bible the only collection of sacred books, that has proved its adaptation to peoples the most widely separated from each other. No two civilizations could be more widely separated than the Oriental civilization, out of the bosom of which the books of the Bible sprang, and that Western civilization, which is founded on it and has grown out of it. And it has been proved to be adapted not only to the most diverse civilizations, but even to barbarism itself; for some of the most wonderful trophies of the elevating, purifying, exalting influences of the Bible have been found among the most degraded races on the face of the earth. The more you investigate the matter, the more you will be convinced that, while it was indeed true that Christ "came unto His

own and His own received Him not," and though many of every nation to whom He has come have received Him not, yet "as many as received Him," of whatever nation, kindred, people or tongue, "to them gave He power to become the sons of God." The wild Hottentot, if only he receives Christ, becomes so elevated and purified thereby, as to be in a position to vindicate his claim to be a son of God, as well as the best of us.

The adaptation of the Bible to all successive ages of the world's history might close this series, were it not that it introduces us to a new feature which deserves separate consideration, viz.:

3. The progressiveness of the Bible. The unity of tone and tenor, of purpose and spirit and plan, which we find throughout the Bible, is not a dead but a living unity. It is a unity of progress, of development. There was evidently an educational development along the line of the Scripture history, the study of which is both interesting and instructive. There was also a germinating and springing, a budding and blossoming of that hope of Israel which found its fruitage in "the fulness of the time," when God sent His Son into the world. There was development of doctrine, too, not only throughout the long ages of the Old Testament, but even in the brief compass of the New, as is most

beautifully and convincingly shown by Bernard, in the Bampton Lectures for 1867.

And then, though the canon has been so long complete, it is a remarkable fact that, as progress is made in other things, we are making fresh discoveries in the inexhaustible mine of Scripture. Just as in Nature many things continue hidden from the ages and generations, until the appointed time comes round, and a Newton or an Edison makes patent what has long been latent; so is it in Scripture. And thus it comes to pass, that the Bible is always in advance of the age, just as Nature is always in advance of the science of the age. What more characteristic of the advance of religious thought in the present century, than the development of that charity and liberality, which for many centuries was so conspicuously absent. But when we open the Bible, lo! there is a charity and liberality, shining on the face of it, so brightly, that it is almost incredible that centuries should have passed, before it was recognized. It has been beautifully suggested, that much of the truth which the Bible contains has been written, as it were, with sympathetic ink, invisible until the time should come, when the world was ready to receive a new heritage of truth. This wonderful progressiveness in the Bible leads us to a fourth point, viz.:

4. What the Bible has to say about the future. And here we might reasonably expect, that there would be some provision to meet that want of our nature, which yearns to know something of what lies within the veil. On the other hand, we should not reasonably expect that such a revelation of the future would be given, as to satisfy an idle curiosity. Revelation with reticence, then, is what we should expect. And is it not even so? The prophetic element of scripture has for its consistent aim from beginning to end, not the gratification of a prying curiosity, but the practical object of warning, guiding and comforting those to whom it was given, and supplying them with motives to personal holiness and ardent devotion to the best interests of their fellow-men. Hence an intentional vagueness and indefiniteness in prophetic language. But, notwithstanding this, there has been already such a marked fulfilment of a large number of prophecies, that strong arguments have been founded on this alone, for the inspiration of the Scriptures. The constant attempt of unbelievers has been, to bring down the date of the prophecies so as to give plausibility to the supposition that the fulfilment came before the prophecy, or else to explain the correspondence by the notion of shrewd guesses or far-sighted prognostication; but let any one study the subject can-

didly and thoroughly, and he will see that, after all doubtful cases are set aside, there remain a sufficient number of unmistakable prophecies, which could not possibly have been written after the event, to support the claim of inspiration.

But the special point now before us has to do rather with that which is still in the future, and especially with those revelations of the world beyond the grave, which we find in scanty measure, but in growing clearness, till, in the end, we rest with delight on the glowing imagery of the closing chapters of the Apocalypse. Now if any one will contrast these reticent and reserved unveilings of the future with the corresponding teachings of the Koran, for instance, or the Buddhist sacred books, the vast difference will be very apparent. Here, as everywhere in the Scriptures, the moral impression is everything; the gratification of curiosity, or of sensual desire, nothing.

The subject is really exhaustless. As we said at the outset, it requires some powers of appreciation to begin with; but, given these powers of appreciation, and we are confident that, the longer the subject is studied, the more will the evidences throng around from every side, that this is more than a collection of ordinary books bound together; that they are indeed what they claim to be—the work

of "holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

And now what is there to be said on the other side? What can the infidel bring forward, to counterbalance the mass of evidence which we have only hinted at in the briefest way? A string of objections and difficulties, founded on particular passages, and most of them appealing to our ignorance. Now, we do not say that these objections and difficulties are all paltry. Far from it. Many of them are. Still, a considerable number are undoubtedly hard to deal with. But what of that? Is it not just what was to have been expected?

Is Nature free from difficulties? And yet does the presence of these difficulties prove that it is not divine in its origin? There is a superficial roughness and ruggedness in many parts of the Bible, but that does not prove that there are not mines of wealth under the surface, any more than the roughness of Colorado proves it to be a God-forsaken country, as some represented it to be, before its hidden riches were disclosed. Just as in the investigation of Nature, so in the study of the Bible, labor is needed, patience is needed, sympathy is needed; but, when these are present, difficulties rapidly disappear, and if any still remain hard and insoluble, yet having so very much to build a solid faith upon,

we can well afford to wait, to suspend our judgment on some points if need be, feeling fully assured that what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

Our treatment of so wide a subject in limits so narrow must necessarily be exceedingly inadequate; but even little as we have said, we think we have said enough to show that, difficulties included, we find these books of the Old and New Testaments to be just what we should reasonably expect them to be as inspired productions; and, therefore, to the strong external evidence brought out in former lectures must be added the still stronger internal evidence, that these Scriptures are in very deed the oracles of God.

CONCLUDING CONTRAST.

The Two Strongholds.

LECTURE XI.

THE STRONGHOLD OF UNBELIEF.

HAVING finished our brief review of the evidences by which our belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures is sustained, we might take up next the evidence furnished for the truth of Christianity by its influence, as observed and experienced. This would introduce us into an entirely new field, where again we should find innumerable confirmations of the divine origin of our holy religion. But, though the field is a very inviting one, our narrow limits will not permit us to enter it, covering, as it does, the broad ground of modern history. We may get some idea of how much there is in it, by reading such a book as the recent work of Uhlhorn on the Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism in the first three centuries.

We feel constrained, therefore, to dismiss the subject with one caution. It has been the fashion of late years to ransack history, for the purpose of finding, and bringing out into the boldest relief, every-

thing that can be made to tell against the influence of Christianity. I need not remind you how the imprisonment of Galileo, the martyrdom of Giordano Bruno, and the burning of Servetus, have become the best known events in history; so much so that it seems strange, that many distinguished writers and speakers should still see the necessity of rehearsing the same stories for the ten-thousandth time. The burning of witches must of course be added to the catalogue, and a few other historical items of the same kind. It does not take many to make up a complete stock in trade. The caution I mean to interpose is this, that we be careful to distinguish between what is really due to Christ and Christianity, and what is due to entirely different, not to say antipodal causes, such as ecclesiasticism, sectarian bigotry, and "science, falsely so called," not to speak of the depravity of human nature, which will manifest itself inside the church as well as outside of it. It is easy for a Draper, after defining Christianity as synonymous with the Roman church, to fasten some very strong imputations upon it. It is easy to array Religion against Science, if, by "Religion," you mean the scholastic philosophy in league with the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. Will any one dare to say that Christ would have imprisoned Galileo, or that Bruno was

put to death because Christianity demanded it? Will any one dare to say that the burning of Servetus, whosoever fault it was, was in accord with the spirit of Christianity, as taught by Christ Himself and His apostles? Is our civilization to be credited with all the murders that are committed within its pale? Is the republican form of government to be held responsible for all the corruptions which disgrace it, when it is put in operation among men like ourselves who, though we belong to the most enlightened nineteenth century, are, nevertheless, still as liable as ever to abuse the best of things? Why then should Christianity be held responsible for all the abuses which, though done in its name, have been in direct opposition to its spirit and teachings?

The experimental argument is also a very tempting one, and the most conclusive of all to those who have actually made the experiment. But we pass this by also, only remarking that, while it is absolutely conclusive only to those who have tested it themselves, it nevertheless ought to have great force with all, in consideration of the vast multitude of examples of the elevating and sanctifying power of Christianity. When the advocate of a purely secular morality can say that "the appearance of but a single example proves the adequacy of the belief"

(See "Is Life Worth Living?" p. 82), while we think he is putting it too strongly, and we should never think of insisting on the adequacy of our belief, if it had only one or a few examples to sustain it, yet, surely, it may be allowed us to say, that the appearance of such an innumerable array of examples furnishes a very strong confirmation of the adequacy of a belief, which is at the same time vouched for by a vast accumulation of evidence from other and independent sources.

Dismissing, then, the argument from history, and from experience, we propose to deal now with a difficulty which may lie in many minds, and which is rather increased than diminished by a presentation of the many converging lines of evidence. It is this: If the evidence is so abundant and satisfactory, why do so many remain unconvinced? The difficulty would not indeed be great, if the unbelief could be traced in all cases, as it can in a great many, to dislike of the truth, or to carelessness and inattention, or even to stupidity. But the skepticism of the age is not so easily explained. After you have deducted the large number who love darkness rather than light, and the still larger number who are so little interested in the subject that they do not care to give it any attention, there still re-

mains a sufficiently formidable array of unbelievers of good moral character, of decided intellectual ability, and with all the appearance of candor, who claim to have examined the evidences of Christianity and found them insufficient. Is there any explanation to be given of this, in harmony with what we have said as to the strength of our position?

We might, indeed, in regard to a large part of this moral and cultured infidelity, that which may be called the scientific skepticism of the age, call attention to the influence of the one-sidedness of the scientific culture, which is not balanced by a corresponding spiritual development. If the exclusive study of theology unfits a man, as it certainly does, for appreciating the methods of scientific demonstration, why should we shut our eyes to the fact, that the exclusive study of science unfits a man for appreciating the methods of spiritual demonstration? But not only is there a tendency towards materialistic conceptions of the universe, on the part of those who are continually occupied with things material, corresponding to the tendency in the other direction of the specialist in theology; but the former is much the stronger tendency of the two, because it is reinforced by the natural preference which men in general have for that which ministers to the specially urgent wants of the lower part of their na-

ture. The theologian may neglect science, but he has a body which he neglects at his peril, and those dependent on him have claims which cannot be set aside; and accordingly perforce a large portion of his attention must be directed toward things material. But the scientific man may neglect his spiritual nature utterly without dying a death which any one can see; he may live day after day and year after year, without cultivating in the slightest degree those faculties, by which he is related to God and the realities of the spiritual sphere, and yet neither himself nor family visibly suffers on account of the neglect; and so it comes to pass that the one-sidedness of the scientific bigot is much more thorough than the one-sidedness of the theologic bigot can possibly be. In this direction we are convinced lies the explanation of a large part of the scientific infidelity of the time.

But this consideration, we readily admit, does not apply with the same force to the historians, and still less to the theologians, who are found in our day in the ranks of the unbelieving. As to the theologians, it must be borne in mind that, when church and state are so closely allied as they are on the continent of Europe, it does not follow that the occupants of theological chairs are truly representative of the Christianity of the land. Many of the

utterances from the theological chairs have not been from a spiritual, but from a purely philosophical standpoint—a fact which must be borne in mind in estimating their significance as signs of the times. But whatever discount we may have to make from the spiritual insight of such men, we cannot deny their competency as literary and historic critics; and how is it that they can examine so thoroughly as they seem to do, the historic foundations of Christianity, and yet come to the conclusion that what we receive as facts are only myths and legends?

The answer to this question will introduce us to the present stronghold of infidelity; and, strange to say, it is a dogma, a dictum, an oracular utterance of certain men. The dogma is this, that there can be no such thing as a power above nature made known to man. The supernatural must be got rid of at all hazards, and if facts seem to stand in the way, so much the worse for the facts, that is all. It is laid down as a foundation principle, that no amount of evidence can be accepted as proof of anything supernatural. Let me present a few quotations to make the dogmatism of these skeptics apparent. Strauss, in his *Life of Jesus for the German people*, under the head of “Considerations preparatory to the following investigation,” says

(§23): "The miraculous is a foreign element in the gospel narratives of Jesus, which resists all historical treatment, and the conception of the myth is the means whereby we eliminate it from our subject." Further on, under head of "Plan of the work," he says: "Over and above *this peculiar apparatus for causing miracles to evaporate in myths*, criticism will avail itself of all means," &c. (The italics are not in the original). You see from this, that it was not on historical but on anti-supernatural grounds that Strauss based his famous mythical theory. He had to get rid of the miracles so as to keep his dogma, and he used the mythical theory as the best means of getting rid of them. Renan, in his "Apostles" (Carleton, N. Y. p. 37), says: "The first twelve chapters of the Acts are one tissue of miracles. Now one absolute rule of criticism, is not to allow any place among historical accounts to any miraculous stories." Now I ask in all fairness, is this criticism, or is it dogmatism? It is true that he adds: "nor is this owing to a metaphysical system, for it is simply the dictate of observation." Here he falls back on the oft refuted sophism of Hume, that miracles are contrary to all experience, which is a simple begging of the question, for it is the very point at issue. We say, that miracles are not contrary to *all* experience, and we

point to the experience of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and others who lived at that time. But all this is quietly laid aside. On what grounds? On the grounds of historical criticism? Not at all. But simply by the repetition of the *assertion* that miracles are contrary to all experience. If that is not dogmatism, what is it?

And as it is with the great leaders of the German and French schools of so-called criticism, so has it been in England on the part of those who have followed in the wake of their continental leaders. Take Baden Powell, who may be considered to have struck the first clear note in England on the subject. He says, in his essay on the study of the evidences of Christianity, ("Essays and Reviews," p. 150): "In an age of physical research like the present, all highly cultivated minds and duly advanced intellects have imbibed more or less the lessons of the inductive philosophy, and have, at least in some measure, learned to appreciate the grand foundation conception of universal law—to recognize the impossibility . . . of any modification whatsoever in the existing conditions of material agents, unless through the invariable operation of a series of eternally-impressed consequences, following in some necessary chain of orderly connection, however imperfectly known to

us. So clear and indisputable indeed has this great truth become, so deeply seated has it been now admitted to be in the essential nature of sensible things and of the external world, that all philosophical inquirers adopt it as a primary principle and guiding maxim of all their researches." There it is, you see, quite honestly expressed: they all "*adopt it as a primary principle and guiding maxim of all their researches;*" so that, as a matter of course, every one can predict beforehand what the result of these researches must be. The primary principle and guiding maxim of all their researches is that the thing they are investigating can not be true. Any clear-headed man can estimate the value of these researches, so far as the main point at issue is concerned. Only it is hard to avoid raising the question: Why any researches at all, since the very point in dispute is settled before the researches are begun? But this would be scarcely a fair way of putting it, for these men really are not investigating whether Evangelical Christianity be true or false. They have decided its falsehood before they began; and the real object of their researches is simply to determine which of the many hypotheses of falsehood will be least at variance with those facts, which can not be got rid of by any method of "elimination," however ingenious. It

would be a great mistake, for instance, to suppose that when such men as Strauss and Paulus are arrayed against each other, the one is arguing for the truth and the other for the falsehood of evangelical Christianity. Both the one and the other has decided its falsehood before he began his researches; and the only dispute between them is as to what theory of falsehood will appear the more plausible. These remarks will not apply, however, to such a book as "Supernatural Religion," which does address itself apparently with great thoroughness to the question of truth or falsehood; but it is a significant fact that though historical investigation fills a large part of the work, it is not entered upon until many pages have been devoted to building up the strongest prejudice against the entertaining of the idea of the supernatural. And thus it will be found that, whether it is so expressed or not, the real reason for rejecting the facts of the gospel is the dogma, that miracles can not be admitted on any consideration, however strong the evidence be. I say "whether expressed or not," because it is now getting to be the fashion to say nothing about it, but simply to take it for granted as an axiom that no one will ever dream of questioning. This is the method adopted in the latest productions of the Leyden school of skepticism, which may be con-

sidered as the consummation of rationalistic dogmatism, for their new edition of the Bible, prepared for young people, who above all others ought not to be so imposed upon, does not even suggest the idea that there is any question on the subject, but throughout speaks of the legends and falsehoods of every part of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, just as if there were no longer any who believed even so well-attested a fact as the Resurrection of the Lord !

It may be of service to give a single illustration of the way in which the dogma controls the researches. Take, for instance, the question as to the date of Luke's gospel. Alford examines the question (and every one who is acquainted with his works knows how painstaking he is and how scrupulously honest in putting things in the worst light for his own cause), and decides "A. D. 50-58 as the limits within which it was probable that the gospel was published." He examines the question separately as to the date of the Acts, and decides for A. D. 63. Renan, on the other hand, fixes the date of the Acts about 71 or 72. On what ground? Because it was evidently written after Luke, and Luke must have been written after A. D. 70. But why must Luke have been written after 70? Because it contains a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and

therefore *must* have been written after the event ! The reason of the difference between Alford and Renan is very apparent. Alford examines on historical grounds. Renan has a dogma which he must maintain at all hazards. If a genuine prophecy were admitted, it would overthrow his dogma, and accordingly, to save his dogma, he sacrifices everything that stands in his way. He has adopted the impossibility of anything superhuman, either in knowledge or power, as "the primary principle and guiding maxim of all his researches," and as a matter of course he reaches his foregone conclusion. This illustration of the way in which prophecy is dealt with, together with those which have been given from Strauss and others, of the way in which miracles are dealt with, will serve to show what is the real worth of all this manipulation which goes by the name of "the higher criticism." Its strength is found in the dogmatic assertion that nothing can by any means be credited which demands superhuman power or knowledge to account for it.

We are willing to submit everything to criticism. There have been those who have planted themselves on the dogma of inspiration, and refused to listen to any critical examination of its foundations; but the number has been small at all times among intelligent

Christians, and is smaller still than ever. We open up everything to criticism, because we have nothing to conceal. But our opponents, while professing to be the advocates of universal criticism, nevertheless refuse to subject to the criticism of reason that dogma on which their whole system rests. They disallow entirely the critical question, "*Why* should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" They plant themselves on a dogma, which begs the whole question at issue, and then, following it as a guiding maxim, go on with their "researches." And herein there is furnished a quite sufficient reason why, with all their learning, and all their ability, and even all their candor, they can not accept the evidences of Christianity. If once they would surrender their dogma, and listen to the facts and arguments without being controlled by it, they would no doubt feel the force of them, as other candid and intelligent men do, who are free from bondage. But, being bound hand and foot with the inexorable necessity of eliminating the supernatural, they are compelled to choose among the various forms of unbelief.

The truth is that skeptical theology is always ruled by skeptical philosophy. It was the Pantheistic philosophy which ruled the speculations of the great German infidels of the last generation; it is

the philosophy of naturalistic evolution which rules the speculations of Kuenen and his followers to-day; and, so long as men will bind themselves over to be the uncompromising advocates of any human philosophy, it is not to be expected that they will be in an attitude of mind for receiving at all favorably "the truth as it is in Jesus," in its simplicity, purity and beauty. We have much sympathy with those who stumble at the hard doctrines and metaphysical subtleties which have been often advanced in the name of Christianity; but we have none whatever with those who, because they are ordered to do so by a ready-made physical or metaphysical system, take the position that no amount of evidence can prove that such an one as Jesus of Nazareth did anything beyond the power of ordinary humanity. We feel sure that the progress of enlightenment will, in due time, sweep away this shallow dogmatism from the face of the earth.

The trouble with the skepticism of the age is that it is not thorough enough. It questions everything but its own foundations. If it would only question these, the result would appear, and we have no doubt the day is at hand when it will be clearly shown, that there is no logical halting place between absolute atheism on the one hand, and the belief in Christ and the great facts and truths of Christianity

on the other. And, as soon as this issue is fairly joined, we have no fear of the outcome, for the simple reason that we have too much faith in humanity, to estimate at any large aggregate the number of the fools who will be content to say, even in their hearts, "There is no God." When people generally discover, as sooner or later they are sure to do, that to give up the possibility of the manifestation of Divine agency in the universe, is to give up the idea of a Father in Heaven, all that remains in them of goodness, and nobility, and hopefulness as well, will rise up in indignation, and scatter to the winds both the physical and the metaphysical dogmas on which alone atheism can rest for support.

LECTURE XII.

THE STRONGHOLD OF FAITH.

“THEIR rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.” This will be clearly seen when we pass from the stronghold of unbelief to the stronghold of faith. We have seen that the stronghold of the unbelief of the time is a dogma, while, as will presently appear, the Christian stronghold is in facts. Unbelievers, it is true, deal largely in facts, but when you trace their arguments to their ultimate foundation you find dogma at the bottom. On the other hand, while we admit that Christians deal largely in dogmas, it is found that when you trace these dogmas to their ultimate foundation, you strike the bed-rock of hard facts that can not be denied. For example, inspiration is a dogma; and if we rested everything on inspiration, our position would be no better than that of the infidel, who rests everything on the dogmatic assertion, that there can be no power above nature which can by any possibility be made known to

man. But we do not rest upon the dogma of inspiration as our foundation, nor upon any dogma whatever, but upon the Christ of history, a person whose existence and work, and superiority of character, and commanding influence in the world's history no one can deny. And herein we follow Christ Himself, who said, in words which would have been ridiculous from the lips of any other man that ever lived upon the earth, "I am the truth." Confucius, Zoroaster, Plato, might, without the imputation of being fantastic or fanatical, have said, "I teach the truth," but only One could say, without stultifying Himself by the utterance, "I *am* the truth."

The vast accumulation of evidence for Christian belief has, to a large extent, hindered even Christians themselves from recognizing where their greatest strength lies. Inasmuch as nine-tenths of all the attacks that are made on Christianity are attacks on the Bible, the attention of Christian apologists has been almost exclusively directed to its defense. And their success has been so great, that comparatively few have felt it necessary to go back of it. The Bible is such a wonderful book that, even if we could give it no place in history at all, it would commend itself to the careful consideration of every thoughtful man. Even though it

set up no claim to inspiration, and could show as little connection with any remarkable name in history as the Book of Mormon can, it would be hard to explain it without some superhuman theory of its origin. If the defense of the Bible, as a whole, against infidel attacks had been more difficult or less successful than it has been, there would have been greater disposition to fall back on the foundations on which the Bible itself rests. Now it is true that, so far as internal evidence is concerned, the position of the defenders of the Scriptures is stronger than ever. The objections against particular passages are for the most part the old objections that have done duty in every generation from the beginning till now, while deeper and more comprehensive study has brought out new beauties and glories, new adaptations and correspondencies. But inasmuch as the inspiration of the Scriptures is now called in question even by those who admit the wonderful adaptation of the Bible to the spiritual wants of man, it is necessary, especially in these days, to make it evident that while we hold as strongly as ever that the Bible is its own witness, we decline to admit that it is its only witness; we maintain that, if the witness of the Bible to itself is challenged, we can fall back upon a Witness nobler still—One who stands acknowledged,

even by the enemies of the Bible, as the culmination of earth's greatness, goodness, and nobility.

There is evidence to show that some even of the acutest and most learned of the opponents of Christianity have not really estimated the true strength of our position. Take the following passage from the introductory chapter of "Supernatural Religion" as an illustration; "Orthodox Christians at the present day may be divided into two broad classes, one of which professes to base the Church upon the Bible, and the other the Bible upon the Church. The one party assert that the Bible is fully and absolutely inspired; that it contains God's revelation to man, and that it is the only and sufficient ground for all religious belief." Now this is an entire misunderstanding and misrepresentation of our position. It is a confounding of the question as to the limits of inspiration with the question as to the grounds of inspiration. We are all familiar with the standing controversy as to whether the Church rests on the Bible or the Bible on the Church. The latter is the Roman Catholic view, while the Protestant theologians have taken the position that the Church derives her authority from the Bible, not the Bible from the Church. Hence the famous watchword (originated by Chillingworth, I believe), "The Bible and the Bible alone,

the religion of Protestants." Now we are quite willing to stand by the motto, "The Bible and the Bible alone," when the question is as to *the limits* of that which is authoritative, when the controversy is with those who wish to impose decrees of councils and ecclesiastical dogmas and traditions as of equal authority with the Holy Scriptures; but it is quite a different thing, when the question is as to *the foundation* of our faith, and the controversy is with those who would take it away from us altogether. We do say that the Church rests upon the Bible, but we utterly deny that "the Bible is the only ground for all religious belief." We do say that "we (the church) are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (the Bible); but we do not stop there. With the apostle we go on and say, "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." And it is satisfactory to know that, while "the foundation of the apostles and prophets" is so strong that it has resisted all attempts to undermine it for more than seventeen centuries, the corner-stone is so immovable that it not only stands secure in the estimation of all the friends of Christianity, but "even our enemies themselves being judges." There never was or well could be a more uncompromising opponent of Christianity than John Stuart Mill, and yet he must (p. 254) "place

the Prophet of Nazareth, even in the estimation of those who have no belief in his inspiration, in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast;" and further on he says "that to the conception of the rational skeptic it remains a possibility, that Christ actually was what He supposed Himself to be," that He was "a man charged with a special, express, and unique commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue." You may think it strange that any one who would go so far should refuse or hesitate to go further; but there is always some reason which, if we only knew it, would explain all; and in this case there happens to be something in the very same paragraph which is sufficient to explain it. He has occasion to refer to the gospel of John, which he does in terms implying the greatest contempt; and he actually says, in regard to those lovely farewell words at the last supper, recorded in the fourteenth and following chapters, and finishing with the intercessory prayer—words which have charmed the hearts of spiritual men in all ages beyond anything else that was ever written or read: "The east was full of men who could have stolen any quantity of this poor stuff!" What more conclusive proof could be had, that the great logician had starved his spiritual nature to death? And it only

shows how strong "our Rock" is, that a man with so little power to appreciate spiritual things as this would indicate, should feel constrained to speak in such exalted terms as he elsewhere uses in regard to Him in whom our confidence is ultimately placed.

"Even our enemies themselves being judges." I believe it would be very easy, by gathering together the concessions made by the great leaders of the opposition to supernatural Christianity, to rear the entire structure which they are trying to demolish. It has been often shown, how those discussing the subject from different points of view, use arguments which are mutually destructive; and thus the enemies of the truth devour one another, and leave the Christ of history standing in the midst; and we can well imagine Him there, looking down with ineffable tenderness and compassion on the scene, while from time to time those loving eyes of His are lifted up, as the earnest prayer ascends to heaven, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But it would be interesting to show, not only how by their hostile arguments they destroy one another, but how by their various concessions they grant all that is needed for a solid foundation of faith.

If, as we have seen, one uncompromising opponent of Christianity speaks of the gospel of John

as "poor stuff," which could be stolen by the bushel, another, who as stoutly denies the authenticity of that gospel and the credibility of its author, is yet constrained to write in this way about him and it: "The disciple whom Jesus loved has reached a point of development which not only stands out from that of the old Catholic church as the ideal over against a miserably defective reality, but also far transcends anything which the Christianity of to-day, as a whole, has as yet attained to; and within the New Testament the fourth gospel must be regarded as the ripest and fairest fruit of the spirit of Jesus." (Bible for Learners, p. 692.) And if you ask how a man, who can speak in such lofty terms of the fourth gospel, can nevertheless believe that in substance it is false from beginning to end, we can only remind you that he is one of those who has adopted the anti-supernatural dogma as "a primary principle and guiding maxim of all his researches," so that he is obliged to discredit its truth while he cannot deny its beauty, or shut his eyes to its superlative excellence and elevation. So much for the theologian, who has some spiritual insight, but is entirely astray on account of the bad logic of his guiding maxim.

On the other hand, the great logician who, because he is wanting in spiritual insight, calls the

gospel "poor stuff," yet cannot but admit that the guiding maxim of the other is illogical, for he says (in his essay on Theism): "Once admit a God, and the production by His direct volition of an effect, which in any case owed its origin to His creative will, is no longer a purely arbitrary hypothesis to account for the fact, but must be reckoned with as a serious possibility." Now, if only Dr. Hooykaas had logic enough to see the force of what Mill says about the supernatural, his difficulties about the credibility of the gospels would disappear. On the other hand, if Mill had had the spiritual insight of Dr. Hooykaas, he could not have rested in the conception of the mere possibility of Christ being a man charged with a special, express, and unique commission from God. Thus the logic of the strong logician is on our side, and the spiritual insight of the skeptical theologian is on our side; and all that infidelity really has to build upon, so far as these two representative men are concerned, is the weak spirituality of the logician and the weak logic of the theologian. And so I believe it would be found, if we were to make a diligent and thorough search all through the ranks of the opponents of the gospel. With the concessions of the strong scientific men, the strong historians, the strong literary critics, the strong logicians, of the opposition, we

could construct a sufficient foundation for evangelical Christianity, and crown it with this motto: "Our Rock is not as their rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."

When Christ is presented as the truth, it is very hard to gainsay or resist. And it is important to remember that, all through the New Testament, it is the personal historic Christ who is presented as the object of faith. It is "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." It is true that faith in Christ, if it be genuine, will lead to belief of the Bible; but in many cases a very great deal depends on what is presented first. A very intelligent man of my acquaintance lately expressed his shrinking from Christianity by saying: "You would make me begin at the first of Genesis and take it right straight through." Now this is not the position of evangelical Christianity. It is the gospel that we insist upon, the gospel of Jesus the Christ. And many a man that stumbles at many hard things in the Bible would find no excuse for rejecting Christ and His gospel. The simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus will commend itself more or less to all honest and earnest minds. And then there is not only the simplicity but the vitality of the faith which attaches itself to the person of Jesus, and which therefore shows itself to be not

a matter of creed, but of life. Many men shrink from systems ready-made. Our systems of theology may be able to make a very good defense of themselves, and it would be easy to show that many of those who are the most bitter against systems of theology have yielded a blind allegiance to ready-made systems of philosophy. But it is important to know that we are under no obligation, in dealing with the foundations, to defend any system of theology. The faith which is necessary to begin with in every case is simple confidence in Christ. It may begin with an idea no higher than Mill's, of Christ as "a man charged with a special, express, and unique commission from God." It seems very evident that the first disciples commenced with no higher idea of Him than this. Even Peter, James and John, were no further on, when they began their Christian career. And if the beginner in the Christian life now will only follow in the footsteps of the man Christ Jesus, and honestly try to profit by His instructions, and keep His words as these disciples did, the result will be the same. In due time, to the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" will come the unhesitating answer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." We have such confidence in "our Rock," that we have no fear for any that will only surrender themselves to His guidance. Just

as He is able and willing to pardon and restore the greatest sinner who will only truly repent, so is He able and willing to guide into all truth those who are farthest astray in their conceptions of divine things, if only they are willing to be led by Him. Let any man, whatever his preconceived opinions be, only take up the yoke of the Christ of the gospels and learn of Him; let him take these words and that example of His and live by them day by day, and in due time he will be as orthodox as he need be on the Bible question, on all questions of theology, on everything that is of any consequence. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine."

In concluding these lectures I shall only throw out a suggestion, on which a volume might profitably be written. We referred in the introductory lecture to the cumulative nature of the Christian evidence, and showed how unfair it was to represent its strength as that of a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link. Now that we have been speaking of the stronghold of Christianity, it is important to remind you that the strength of our position is not even measured by the strength of our strongest argument. Strong as our position is when we plant our feet simply on the "Rock of Ages," and take our stand upon the unquestionable

facts of the life of the Christ of history, it is yet very much strengthened by the convergence of evidence from every other point to the central Rock on which our feet are planted; and the special suggestion we have to throw out is, the remarkable contrast between the infidel rock and the Christian rock, as regards their relation to all the outlying field. The conception of Christ as a divine Savior adapts itself to all the facts and phenomena as they are presented to us in history and experience. The anti-supernatural dogma of the opposition is so ill adapted to any of them, that the only way in which it can be maintained is by the "reconstruction" of everything. The Christ of the gospels does not suit it, and so there must be a reconstruction of the life of Christ to match, and we are asked to take the Christ of Strauss', or Renan's, or Keim's imagining, instead of the Christ of history. The Bible does not suit it in any part, and so it must all be reconstructed, from Moses up to John; and so imperative has the necessity become, that we have, as the latest production of the infidel school, a bible according to Oort and Hooykaas, assisted by Kuenen, to take the place of the old Bible of history. And in the same way Baur and others have been laboring to reconstruct the history of the church. And even that is not sufficient, for the very universe itself is found to

be in need of reconstruction, to harmonize with the anti-supernatural dogma, and, accordingly, not only are evil spirits and angels ruled out of existence, but even God Himself is banished from His universe; and not only so, but the spiritual nature of man is resolved into mere vibrations of the brain and nervous system. And the reconstruction process does not stop even here; for those moral distinctions which were supposed to lie in the nature of things are included in the all embracing material development, and we must have new "Data of Ethics" from the fertile brain of Herbert Spencer to take the place of the discarded Law of God; and thus everything, everything is reconstructed on the basis of the barest materialism. Now, does not the necessity for such wholesale reconstruction of everything render that dogma of the infidel, which calls for it all, just a little suspicious?

On the other hand, take the Christian conception. It harmonizes, as we have seen, with our own human nature in all its complexity; it harmonizes with those thoughts of God which the best of men have had in all ages; it harmonizes with what we cannot but believe as to the immovable foundations of right and wrong; it harmonizes with the gospels as we find them, without any manipulation like that which is resorted to by our imaginative reconstruct-

ors; it harmonizes with the Bible as it has come down to us from the past; it harmonizes with the great facts of the history of Christianity in the world; it harmonizes with individual Christian experience; it harmonizes with those hopes and aspirations of which the best of men are conscious in their best and purest moments. And is not all this a mighty confirmation of its truth? Let us then by all means cast aside that miserable dogma, which begins by "eliminating" the superhuman element from the Life of Jesus, and ends by destroying the very foundations of morality; and, with our feet securely planted on the "Rock of Ages," let us still raise to highest heaven the song:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all."

In the book of Isaiah (xxviii, 16,) we find this remarkable prophecy: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." This prophecy is quoted by the apostle Peter in his epistle, and applied to Christ in these terms: "To whom coming, as unto a Living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye

also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.” In the focus between these two lights, the one casting its rays forward and the other backward on the spot, lies the much controverted passage, which records the answer of the Master to this same apostle, immediately after he has for the first time expressed his faith in Him as “THE CHRIST, the Son of the Living God”: “Thou art Peter, and upon THIS ROCK I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”. (Matt. xvi, 18). This is the Christian stronghold; and it is the only Stronghold for Eternity. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST.”

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